

WHEN DAVID BECAME GOLIATH

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ABSTRACT

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For the first time since its establishment as a nation, and following four successive victories against various Arab conventional armies between 1948 and 1973, Israel was forced to withdraw militarily from south Lebanon in May 2000. This thesis investigates the defeat of the Israeli Defense Force by a guerilla army, Hezbollah. Rarely are the causes of defeat on the modern battlefield simply a case of military failure. Specifically this study will focus on the combination of factors that in unison forced the withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Force from Lebanon.

The study concludes that a combination of political, military and social factors combined to force Israel to withdraw from Lebanon. A failure by Israel's politicians to correctly identify the true nature of the problem and to link political goals to achievable military objectives condemned the 1982 invasion from the outset. Additionally, the Israeli Defence Force was slow to adapt to guerilla warfare throughout the 18-year war, preferring to rely on the proven methods of prior conventional wars to achieve victory. Moreover, the social impact of a long and unwinnable war without a just cause impacted severely on Israeli society weakening support for an Army whose historical role had changed from protector to aggressor.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| APC | Armored Personnel Carrier |
| IDF | Israeli Defense Force |
| IR | Islamic Resistance |
| KIA | Killed in Action |
| LRB | Lebanese Resistance Brigades |
| OGL | Observer Group Lebanon |
| PLO | Palestine Liberation Organization |
| RSB | Roadside Bomb |
| S3 | Unit Operations Officer |
| SAM | Surface-to-Air Missile |
| SLA | South Lebanon Army |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNIFIL | United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon |
| UNTSO | United Nations Truce Supervision Organization |
| US | United States |
| WIA | Wounded in Action |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On 24 May 2000, Israel withdrew from Southern Lebanon after an eighteen-year occupation. Between 1948 and 1973, four previous conventional Arab-Israeli wars had resulted in much heralded Israeli victories against overwhelming odds, giving birth to the now apparent myth of Israeli military invincibility. This thesis addresses the question of why Israel withdrew. Was it a decision resulting from social and political disillusionment due to a failure to achieve stated objectives? Was the withdrawal forced upon Israel because of an inability to adapt to guerilla warfare? If it was forced upon them, what factor or combination of factors caused Israel to withdraw from what was for eighteen years supposedly such a critical strategic occupation? Who are Hezbollah and how did this small guerilla force so successfully challenge this regional superpower and destroy the myth of Israeli military invincibility?

The question that this thesis will seek to answer is, What combination of factors resulted in the withdrawal of Israel from Southern Lebanon? A common theme amongst similar recent historical examples, such as the French in Algeria, the United States of America in Vietnam, and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, showed that a mixture of military, political, and social factors combined to prevent victories by these superpowers despite their apparent technological superiority. Although there is no intention to undertake an in-depth comparison with the above conflicts, comparisons will, however, be drawn with Israel's earlier invasion of Lebanon during Operation Litani in 1978 and with the period between 1982 and 2000.

On 24 May 2000, Israel complied with UN Resolutions 425 and 426, passed on 19 March 1978, which called on Israel to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory. The irony of this political decision was that the resolve to withdraw was the political platform on which the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, a former Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) between 1991 and 1995, was voted into office. As Carl von Clausewitz notes, “War is only a part of political intercourse, therefore by no means an independent thing in itself;”¹ and therefore, the political causes and objectives, are intrinsic to the study of this lengthy military operation. Israel’s long war in Lebanon also had far-reaching social ramifications. These ramifications have seen a generational change in public attitude towards Israel’s Defense Force and its politicians.

Instead of reveling in its “underdog” status, Israel had become both victim and aggressor in Lebanon, causing many Israelis for the first time to see themselves in a new light. Further, Israel, despite its vast and successful military experiences, was forced to fight a war of a totally different nature, one it found impossible to master. It was now fighting a guerilla, on ground not of its own choosing ,and without the Western world’s unequivocal support. Further, the IDF fought with weapons and tactics best suited to conventional warfare in a flat desert environment. Together these factors provided the Israeli Defence Force with its greatest challenge since the nation’s birth. The background of this thesis has its beginnings in what is commonly referred to as “the Palestinian Problem”; however, this of itself is insufficient in explaining the character of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, this chapter will begin by briefly explaining the historical

background of Palestine, Israel, Syria and Lebanon and their involvement in the lead-up to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Palestine

It was former Israeli Labor Party Prime Minister Golda Meir who said in a 1969 interview with *The Sunday Times* of London, when asked about the Palestinians, “They do not exist.”² It is generally considered that the Philistines, the ancestors of the Palestinians, inhabited areas of Canaan from approximately 1500 to 1200 B.C. At around the same period, the Israelites conquered Canaan, but were unable to defeat the Philistines due to the latter’s superior military organization and iron weapons until the defeat of the army led by Goliath of Gath by King David around 1000 B.C. Since this time, Palestine has fallen under the rule of a variety of conquerors or administrators, among them Israel, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, the Egyptian Ptolemies, Syrian Seleucids, Rome, Byzantium, various Muslim armies, the Ottomans, and the British.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Palestine had no defined borders and was at best a largely neglected province under Ottoman rule. This area of approximately 10,000 square miles between the Jordan and the Mediterranean was populated by perhaps 55,000 Jews and up to 600,000 Arabs (mostly Muslims, but including a Christian community amounting to perhaps 10 percent of the total) and Druze. The end of World War I saw the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and control of its Arabic-speaking territories passed to Great Britain and France. As a result of the Sykes-Picot agreement, Britain gained Palestine and France took control of Lebanon and Syria.

Despite promises of Arab independence given to them by the British in 1916-1917, the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, in fact, directly contradicted this by

promising support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. On 24 July 1922, the Balfour Declaration was incorporated into the League of Nations mandate for Palestine. The decision to give the land of Palestine to Israel after also promising it to the Arabs for their assistance to the allies during WWI inevitably lay the grounds for certain strife between Arabs and Jews. Over the next twenty years, fearing dispossession at the hands of the Jews, a series of poorly organized and sporadic Arab uprisings occurred throughout Palestine aimed at predominantly Jewish settlements.

In 1947, Britain passed the problem of Palestine over to the United Nations, which suggested the partition of Palestine. However, the Palestinians rejected this, and on 14 May 1948 David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. Immediately, five Arab armies attacked Israel but were defeated, resulting in hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, many of whom fled to neighboring countries. The remainder were compelled to live side by side with their conquerors in the new Jewish State. A significant proportion of those who left moved to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of Jordan, wherein 1964 the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged as a mainly political body to represent Palestinians as an umbrella organization. Over time, a Palestinian “state-within-a-state” was emerging in Jordan, however, despite tacit support for their predicament, Jordanians resented the increased Palestinian influence on their politics and employment situation. Subsequently, clashes between Jordanians and Palestinians culminated in 1970, when the Jordanian Army drove the Palestinians out of the Hashemite Kingdom.

The Palestinians then took refuge in Lebanon, where a similar pattern of a state-within-a-state emerged. Once again, although ideologically and culturally supportive of

their plight, the Lebanese began to resent the influence of the Palestinians, which only exacerbated Lebanon's own difficulties. The Palestinians used Lebanon as a base to continue their attacks on Israel in the same way as they had in Jordan. The Palestinians used these attacks to raise world awareness about their plight; however, their impact was doubtful given their indiscriminate targeting of innocent civilians.

In 1978, Israel invaded Lebanon during Operation Litani in an attempt to destroy bases in Southern Lebanon used by Palestinian guerillas. Operation Litani was partially successful in that it temporarily dealt a blow to the quantity of Palestinian attacks; however, the PLO's attacks soon resumed. Undeterred, the Palestinians continued their attacks over the following years until 1982 when Israel launched Operation Peace for Galilee in an attempt to remove the Palestinians from Lebanon altogether. The Palestinian leadership and up to 15,000 of its fighters were shipped out of Lebanon to various Arab countries under a deal brokered by the USA preventing the annihilation of the guerillas remaining in Beirut. Although removed from Lebanon, the Palestinian movement continued and indeed reached a peak during the "Intifada" that began in 1987. The Palestinian problem has continued to be a thorn in Israel's side as it struggles to reach a resolution with the Palestinians.

Israel

Israel's early geographical history parallels that of Palestine falling under the rule of the same conquerors. Despite the effects of the Diaspora, however, many Jews had sought to return to the land of the Torah. As early as the 1800s, European Jews, in particular, began immigrating in small numbers to the land they saw as their only real refuge from pogroms. "The 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which His Majesty's

government promised Dr Weizman, head of the Zionist organization, to provide a national home for the Jews in Palestine”³ added legitimacy to their claims, whilst at the same time inflaming Arab opinion.

After its establishment as a nation in 1948, Israel fought four major wars against various Arab nations or coalitions in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973. Israel was militarily successful in all these conflicts and in 1967 gained even more land (the West Bank of Jordan, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula won). All of these victories involved conventional conflicts against numerically superior enemies (except in 1956) and earned Israel an almost mythical reputation as a military force. In time, these victories also resulted in peace treaties with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, a result that Israel felt would be replicated in Lebanon. Lebanon in fact did sign a US-brokered peace treaty with Israel in 1983, but it was never ratified as a result of Syrian pressure placed on Lebanon.

Israel had historically paid little strategic heed to Lebanon, as it had never experienced problems with it and, in fact, it considered Lebanon as its most peaceful neighbor. As a result of increasing attacks against it since 1970, however, Israel launched Operation Litani in 1978 in an attempt to destroy Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) bases operating from inside Lebanon. Operation Litani proved only partially unsuccessful in that it merely drove the PLO north to Beirut temporarily rather than destroying it.

Lebanon

Lebanon’s earliest inhabitants were the Phoenicians around 3,500 B.C. As with Palestine, a variety of powers ruled Lebanon until A.D. 64, when it too became part of

the Roman Empire. By the fourth century, Christianity was firmly established and Lebanon had become something of a refuge for persecuted religious minorities, including Muslim Shiites in the ninth century and Druze in the eleventh century. The geographical inaccessibility of the region and the diversity of beliefs in Lebanon ensured a degree of autonomy in certain areas but proved a hindrance to unity as a nation. By 1516, Lebanon had become part of the Ottoman Empire and remained under so for the next 300 years. During this time, periodic strife broke out between the Druze and the Maronites, as well as between various foreign nations, including Britain, France, and Russia. After World War I, Lebanon became a French mandate. During the 1920s the French redefined Lebanon's borders, combining the largely Muslim-inhabited coastal plain with the Christian-dominated mountains to create the Republic of Lebanon. It remained under French mandate until 1943, when Lebanon became fully independent.

After independence, Lebanon initially emerged as a stable nation and a major center for finance and trade. This multiconfessional democracy, however, was unable to withstand the politics of seventeen officially recognized Christian, Islamic, and Islamic derived communities coexisting in a relatively small area in one of the most volatile regions of the world. To add to this, the authority of different elements of government was distributed unevenly (given that approximately 60 percent of the population are of Muslim background) along socioreligious lines. In order of priority, Maronites held the executive presidency, Sunnis filled the post of Prime Minister, whilst Shiites held the position of Chairman of Parliament. By 1975, Lebanon had imploded in civil war, shattering the country's peaceful cosmopolitan image.

The Palestinians were becoming deeply involved in Lebanese politics and the minority Maronites in particular feared that their presence might disrupt the balance of power. As a result, the Christian Phalangist militia took matters into their own hands and began clashing with Palestinian fighters. The Muslim factions, on the other hand, initially supported the PLO, further aggravating the internecine strife within Lebanon. In time, however, Israeli reprisals against the population in southern Lebanon began to take its toll on the Lebanese Shiites, who, in turn, blamed the Palestinians for their suffering. “In the 1980s, metropolitan Beirut was a patchwork of militia jurisdictions, under the command of warlords who alternately fought and collaborated with one another. The militias were blatantly sectarian and, through much grief and strife, compartmentalized the population into artificial homelands of religious communities.”⁴ The addition of the Palestinian problem in 1970 to this already volatile cocktail was more than Lebanon could handle and the state-within-a-state in southern Lebanon exacerbated an already problematic situation. More than 350,000 Palestinians resided in Lebanon, and the militant Palestinian factions were using the south as a launching pad for raids into Israel.

Syria

Syria is believed to have been inhabited since approximately 5000 B.C. Known until recent times as Assyria, many Syrians today believe it originally encompassed the lands now known as Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and modern Syria. Following successive rule by Egypt, the Babylonians, Hittites, Chaldeans, and Persians, it fell to Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. Following Roman rule, Syria then became a Byzantine province before being conquered by the Arabs in A.D. 636. By the end of the eleventh century, the Crusaders had arrived in the region and incorporated part of Syria into their Christian

Kingdom of Jerusalem. When Salah al-Din defeated the Crusaders, he took Syria and overthrew the Kingdom of Jerusalem at the end of the twelfth century. Ruled by the Mamelukes until the early 1500s, Syria then became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 until the end of World War I, when the allies expelled the Turks. Under French mandate from 1920, Syria finally became a republic in 1946. Successive military coups took place until 1970, when Hafez al-Assad came to power. Notwithstanding his somewhat harsh and dictatorial manner of government, Assad brought political stability to Syria until his death in 2000.

When the Lebanese civil war broke out in 1975, Palestinian and Muslim forces quickly gained the ascendancy, and approximately two-thirds of the country came under their control. This situation did not reflect Syrian intentions to establish greater Syrian control over Lebanon, and Damascus began searching for an opportunity to change this state of affairs. The excuse to intervene presented itself in June 1976. “The pretext for the Syrian invasion was the shelling and siege of two small Christian towns, Andakat and al-Qubaya, by units of al-Hatib’s Lebanese Arab Army. The towns appealed to Syria for protection.”⁵ This provided Syria with the opportunity to locate forces in the Beqa Valley, thereby cutting off any future threat to its western flank by Israel. It also resulted in stabilizing the political environment, which Syria hoped would be more conducive to the installation of a government sympathetic to Syrian intentions. Under Arab pressure Syria agreed to a meeting of the Arab Foreign ministers on 9 June to deal with the situation in Lebanon. This ended with the call for a new cease-fire and the dispatch to Lebanon of an inter-Arab peacekeeping force, which was to operate under the auspices of

the Arab league. This force comprised units from Syria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Algeria, and Libya; however, when the other nations departed, Syria remained.

The relationship between Syria and Lebanon has always been complex at best, with Syria maintaining that Lebanon is, in fact, a part of “Greater Syria.”

Understandably, Christian factions within Lebanon who made up only 14 percent of the population did not share this view.⁶ Nor was this view necessarily shared by a majority of Lebanese Muslims, who have at best tolerated Syrian involvement in their politics only because of Syria’s role in exercising control during the civil war. Due to their own precarious economic situation, by the mid-1970s, an estimated 400,000 Syrians were working in Lebanon which impacted significantly on the Lebanese unemployment situation. “Until 1976 Syria generally lent its support in Lebanon to the PLO, and to Muslim and radical groups. However it maintained a subtle and flexible policy enabling the maintenance of connections with the Christians despite the deep differences between the Ba’ath regime and the Christian community.”⁷ Perhaps more importantly in recent times, Syria has viewed Lebanon strategically as protection of its western flank against Israel. Ironically, Syria’s intervention in Lebanon has been with the tacit agreement of Israel, which has viewed Syria as an important element in maintaining some semblance of control over the warring factions. “Israel became increasingly prepared to accept Syrian intervention provided it was directed against the PLO and the Muslim coalition.”⁸ Accordingly, Syria prefers that the status quo be retained in Lebanon and, as a result, it has found itself both supporting and fighting various factions, including the PLO, depending on the situation at any given time. Most importantly, Syria has supported the

Iranian backed Hezbollah as they have turned out to be Syria's main tool of leverage against Israel in its desire to regain control of the Golan Heights.

Historical Summary

In summary, the historical backgrounds of the main countries involved in this thesis have been at times volatile and uncertain. The countries in question are intrinsically linked to the inherent problems of historical and cultural links to the land, defense, and security. One factor that all of the above mentioned countries have in common is competing interests. Yet, most have also displayed a willingness to use the others as a means to an end when it has been politically or strategically expedient to do so. Syria has consistently supported the Palestinian cause, but at the same time has sometimes ruthlessly attacked them when they appeared to gain too much of a stronghold. Israel has constantly been at war with Syria, but agreed to Syrian intervention in Lebanon to a certain point, even though this placed Syria on Israel's northern flank.

The Palestinian's reason for involvement in the war in Lebanon is unambiguously clear: they were continuing a thirty-year struggle to reclaim their land. This struggle had its beginnings in 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel and continued during their "displacement" to Jordan. After their expulsion from Jordan in 1970, the Palestinian leadership and approximately 350,000 Palestinians moved to mainly refugee camps in southern Lebanon from where their attacks on Israel continued. The majority of Lebanese were sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and south Lebanon was geographically well situated for the conduct of raids and rocket attacks with its three thousand foot peaks overlooking Israel. Furthermore, the Lebanese government was

weak, incapable of imposing its will or influence on the increasingly well-organized Palestinians, who all but created a state-within-a-state in southern Lebanon.

Israel's reasons for invading Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 are less clear. One thing is for certain, however: Israel intended to stop the PLO from launching attacks into northern Israel, attacks that Israel believed were turning Israelis into refugees within their own country by driving settlers from Galilee to the south. As will become apparent, however, the failure of the Israelis to achieve all their goals in a short time resulted in their overstaying their welcome and the rise of an even more formidable enemy, Hezbollah. Syria's involvement in Lebanon during the 1982 Israeli invasion was problematic in that it believed it had a role in ensuring control and influence over the various Lebanese factions. At the same time, however, because of the positioning of its forces in western and central Lebanon, it posed a threat to the eastern flank of the invading Israeli forces. There is no evidence to suggest that Syria sought conflict with Israel in Lebanon in 1982 and, in fact, Syria's desire to exercise some influence over the PLO's actions was, in part, based on a desire to avoid being dragged into direct military conflict with Israel.

The stage for an Israeli invasion therefore appeared set, and to all appearances there were no serious obstacles to a short and decisive Israeli victory. The inhabitants of northern Israel were tiring of PLO rocket attacks and pressure was being placed on Israeli politicians to take action. The PLO was incapable of withstanding an Israeli invasion, Lebanon would apparently welcome it, and Syria would avoid conflict with Israel. Given its recent successes, Israel's failure to decisively achieve its aims militarily was

unimaginable in such an apparently strategically supportive environment, and a short and clinical victory was anticipated.

Operation Litani and the Period Leading Up to Operation Peace for Galilee

The South Lebanon Army (SLA)

Although smaller in scale than Operation Peace for Galilee, Operation Litani provides a necessary and interesting comparison with 1982, particularly in terms of the political objectives and military planning and approach in Israel at the time. Further, it should have provided Israel with both political and military lessons and guidance for the subsequent invasion of 1982.

During the period of May to June 1976, Palestinian and Lebanese Army units attacked several Christian villages in southern Lebanon. The Christians appealed to Tel Aviv for help, and Israel provided the villages with supplies, medical aid, arms, and ammunition, and after a time, even allowed some of these Christian villagers to cross into Israel. Moreover, Major Sa'ad Haddad, a regular officer of the Lebanese Army, was sent with the blessing of part of the Christian community (the Chamounists) with instructions to organize the defenses of the south against the PLO. Haddad received the support of Israel and eventually, with Israeli backing and generous aid, organized the defenses of the Christian villages in the zone.

After Haddad attempted to expand his zone of influence during 1977, PLO counterattacks forced his retreat, despite the assistance of Israeli artillery. As the PLO action against the Haddad militia (later to become known as the South Lebanon Army or SLA) grew, the likelihood of direct Israeli intervention also increased. In September 1977, and in coordination with Haddad, Israel provided support to the Christian offensive

against the Lebanese town of Khiam. Israeli armor took part in the operation, occupying positions in south Lebanon.

In response, the Palestinians began rocket attacks on Israel. The SLA became entrenched in the Christian villages of south Lebanon and, in effect, became Israel's proxy militia. As PLO attacks continued and the effectiveness of the SLA diminished, Israel conceived of seizing a series of geographically dominant positions in south Lebanon, within an area approximately 10 kilometers in depth, stretching eastward from the coast for a distance of approximately 70 kilometers. It intended to use these positions, which would be controlled by the SLA, as a buffer against PLO attacks. Israel's commitment to the SLA necessarily demanded an increase in its activity in south Lebanon, thereby rendering Israeli intrusion inevitable. In November (1977) a process of direct escalation between Israel and the Palestinians developed. In retaliation for Palestinian rocket attacks on northern Israel (which might in turn have been retaliation for Israeli artillery shelling), Israel launched a series of air strikes.⁹

Operation Litani

On 11 March 1978, a Palestinian group hijacked an Israeli bus and drove it to Tel Aviv, and during a gun battle with Israeli security killed 35 and injured 71 Israeli hostages¹⁰. As a result of the understandable outrage that spread throughout Israel, the Israeli government decided to launch an attack on the PLO in south Lebanon on 14 March 1978. Advancing as far north as the Litani River, and with the PLO immediately withdrawing further north to Beirut, the Israelis established a buffer zone from the Litani River south to the border. The United Nations agreed to provide a United Nations

Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to patrol within the security zone from 23 March.

After three months Israel withdrew to the security zone in June 1978.

In his book *War and Intervention in Lebanon*, Yair Evron states his understanding of Israel's objectives in Operation Litani.

The final plan of operations called for an Israeli push along the 100 kilometers border to a depth of about 10 kilometers, the destruction of Palestinian bases there, and the creation of a cordon sanitaire in the area. When the operation began on 14 March 1978, at 23:15 GMT, the Israeli political context and objectives were not clear to the military and political leadership. As is usual in such circumstances, military events tend to dictate political and strategic developments. Military-tactical factors gain in importance and decision-makers tend to cling to them when making decisions on future behavior.¹¹

Accordingly, tactical gains begin driving strategic objectives if the strategic goals are not clear to both the politicians and the military prior to undertaking the operation.

Although the initial plan sought simply to seize numerous dominant positions in south Lebanon, a subsequent plan sought to link these positions into a coherent strip about 10 kilometers wide. The PLO's apparent military weakness and the topographical situation, as seen by the military, dictated this plan. Evron goes on to state that in addition to its initial objectives, Israel now added the strategic goal of entering into prompt negotiations with Lebanon. "Thus, although the initial objective of the operation was to exact vengeance and to strengthen the position of the Christians, wider politico-strategic objectives were added. The operation began to assume the character of an exercise in 'compellance', that is, the use of military force to create new political facts."¹²

The objective of this incursion into South Lebanon in March 1978 was twofold: to destroy the PLO bases that were the continuing source of harassment to settlements in the Galilee and of terrorist raids farther inland; and to extend the territory under the control of Maj Sa'ad Haddad.¹³ In reality, Haddad did not control a region; rather, he exercised

authority over a group of small villages spread throughout south Lebanon. As it turned out, neither of these political/military objectives was satisfactorily met. In the case of the first objective, “Operation Litani did not significantly affect the PLO’s military activities. The overwhelming majority of the fighters simply withdrew in advance of the Israeli attack in order to avoid capture.”¹⁴ Richard Gabriel then goes on to state, “A year after the May 1978 clash, the PLO had repositioned at least 700 active fighters and their support units within the UNIFIL zone.”¹⁵

In terms of the second objective, despite establishing the physical lines of the security zone, the zone never really achieved its purpose. “The deployment of the UNIFIL across southern Lebanon in the spring of 1978 had been intended to establish a physical obstacle preventing further PLO incursions into northern Israel. However, despite this, and despite the presence of Major Haddad’s Free Lebanon forces in the border strip along the Israeli frontier, the PLO continued to use significant areas in southern Lebanon as bases for operations against Israel.”¹⁶

There was also a discrepancy in relation to the Israeli intent to invade southern Lebanon and establish a security zone, thereby preventing attacks by the PLO. The vast majority of the PLO’s most devastating attacks occurred *within* Israel’s borders in the form of suicide bombings and hostage taking. In reality, the katyusha rocket attacks caused very few injuries or deaths and were mainly of nuisance value, whereas the suicide bombings and other, which could be launched from any geographical location in the Middle East, were far more significant in terms of fatalities and psychological effects on the Israeli populace. An example of this is the fact that during 1977 only three Israelis were killed as a result of the PLO shelling in northern Israel (and these were killed in a

single incident). On the other hand, an estimated thirty-four Israelis were killed and seventy-eight injured in the attack on the bus on 11 March 1978. It is also worth noting that PLO artillery at that time was capable of firing up to 15 kilometers, so the establishment of a 10-kilometer buffer zone by Israel was, at best, insufficient.

In addition to this, other issues also became apparent. Instead of attempting to engage the Israelis in a conventional setting during the invasion, the PLO used alternative tactics. “The PLO had no illusions about its ability to withstand the full fury of Israel’s frontal assault. Its forces therefore dispersed, resorting simultaneously to harassing attacks by small groups and dogged rear-guard resistance in selected strongholds, making full use of the terrain and other favorable local factors.”¹⁷ Given that the Palestinian fighters were outnumbered and technologically outgunned, it is no surprise that, as a result of their survival in the face of an overwhelming invasion by a regional superpower, the PLO’s ranks and numbers swelled with volunteers and new recruits in the aftermath of the invasion. “It was on the psychological level that the military outcome was most deeply felt. . . . [T]he Palestinians’ own sense of solidarity and martyrdom was further enhanced.”¹⁸ Martin Van Creveld supported this belief when he noted, “In retrospect, Operation Litani constituted a turning point. It not only proved that the IDF did not know how to deal with the PLO, but also boosted PLO confidence.”¹⁹ This was only aggravated by the ground swell of anger caused by the deaths of so many innocent civilians, most of whom were Muslims.

Operation Litani appears to have provided Israel with some important lessons in the event of future incursions. Israel’s objectives in this operation were not achieved for a variety of reasons. The first objective of destroying the PLO bases would have required

a considerably larger force than the 10,000 Israeli soldiers allocated to the task.²⁰ The reason for this is that the necessary capture of at least the PLO strongholds of Tyre and Sidon, which surprisingly do not appear to have been part of the IDF's objectives, would likely have resulted in significant IDF as well as civilian casualties. In addition, the cutting off of withdrawing guerillas risked entering territory that may have drawn Syria into the battle. In other words, the military means, in terms of force size and composition, were incapable of achieving this objective. Even if the force had been successful initially, serious questions remain as to whether it would have been capable of holding the ground gained.

The failure to attack either Tyre or Sidon is considered charitably by some authors as being due to Israel's desire to prevent unnecessary civilian casualties. Rather, it appears more likely that Israel realized the heavy cost in terms of Israeli soldiers' lives in attempting to subdue these two centers through urban warfare, and therefore failed the test of applying the necessary means to achieve the political objective. In other words, these two cities were the hub of the PLO in south Lebanon and the failure to seriously attempt to capture them ensured that Israel's stated political objectives could not be achieved.

The second objective of establishing and extending the buffer zone controlled by Haddad's forces, with the aim of preventing further attacks on Israel, was also largely unsuccessful. Despite the addition of IDF soldiers and equipment by Israel, Haddad's force was still insufficient to properly control such a large area and did not have the support of the majority of the population, which was Shiite, not Christian. He was

therefore subject to continuous attack by the PLO and unsuccessful in either driving them out or preventing further attacks on Israel.

The apparent failure of the Israeli Government to clearly articulate the political goals resulted in the military driving the political agenda. It appears that political policy with regard to the overall objectives of Operation Litani was being conceived “on the run” and dictated by events, rather than being the basis of military decision making. The addition of the strategic goal of entering into negotiations with Lebanon, an objective added after the invasion, is a typical example of this. Such errors have a tendency to gain their own momentum, and their ramifications multiply disproportionately.

Another lesson provided to Israel was the likely use of guerilla tactics by forces in Lebanon rather than conventional warfare.²¹ Although it was not used in Operation Litani, even a cutoff force is unlikely to be able to prevent the withdrawal of small bands of guerillas north to Beirut, which is exactly what many of the PLO guerillas did. Although the IDF simply rolled quickly north to the Litani River, they achieved little in terms of enemy killed as the enemy simply disappeared rather than fight as typical units. The terrain simply does not suit conventional warfare but is perfect for the conduct of guerilla operations. Small and poorly armed PLO bands were capable of harassing the IDF,²² if not defeating them, and confirmed that a much larger force can be slowed down considerably in such mountainous terrain. The lesson for Israel, therefore, was one of numbers, tactics and force structure required for such a scenario against a guerilla enemy.

Some figures estimate that as many as 2,000 Lebanese civilians may have been killed during this operation²³ while other estimates place the figure at between 1,000 and 2,000.²⁴ In many cases, the civilian casualties hardened the resolve of the Lebanese or

cemented their support for the PLO, despite their dislike for them.²⁵ Israel managed to alienate those it had purported to protect, an issue that would cost them dearly in the future.

If, as it proved, the political objectives were unlikely to be met by military means, why then did Israel undertake what appeared to be a poorly planned mission in Operation Litani? Perhaps the answer lies in the Israeli government's propensity for disproportionate retaliation in response to any provocation. "During 30 years of war and terrorist activity, a tariff of revenge and reprisal was created in Israel like the commercial balance of a blood bank. The success or failure of operations and wars, the need for retaliation and the decision to react or not were also measured according to the number of coffins on both sides of the border."²⁶ Whilst this may well be politically understandable within the borders of Israel, it is hard to understand the value of killing hundreds of innocent Lebanese civilians unless the aim was to so frighten the population that they would instead turn on the PLO and drive them out of south Lebanon.

1978 to 1981

Following Operation Litani, PLO attacks on Israel diminished. In the three-year period between April 1978 and April 1981, the PLO conducted over fifty artillery attacks on Israeli territory, killing ten Israelis and wounding fifty-seven. However, the number and intensity of shellings were considerably less than before the Litani Operation. During the same period, the Israeli Army mounted thirty-two ground operations against PLO installations in South Lebanon. Israeli planes repeatedly bombed the PLO base camps and gunboats and artillery heavily shelled PLO targets within range. Palestinian casualties from Israeli ground, air, and naval assault were estimated at over 1,200.

Meanwhile, the PLO focussed on building an expansive civilian and military infrastructure. “There developed a body of vested interests in the maintenance of the semi-autonomous mini-state, and as a result the level of activity against Israel significantly decreased.”²⁷ During late 1978, the Lebanese Christian Maronites were openly courting Israel. Concurrently, the government of Menachem Begin was seeking to aid and influence the Maronites, with whom Begin felt an almost biblical kinship. The Maronites sought the removal of Syrian influence from Lebanon, but did not have the means to enforce this without outside assistance. Despite often initiating gun-battles with the Syrians, the Maronites consistently complained to Israel of Syrian attempts to destroy the Christians. In referring to the Christians, Begin began using phrases like “preventing genocide” in Lebanon and “regarded himself as bearing the responsibility for the fate of the Maronites and believed his involvement with their plight to be a moral duty no less than a matter of national self-interest.”²⁸

Despite Israeli military intelligence warnings that the Maronites sought to provoke the Syrians and thereby draw Israel into war with Syria,²⁹ Begin ignored the advice in the belief that the Christians were a persecuted minority. As if to prove the Israeli military’s point, Christian Phalange soldiers attacked a Syrian headquarters based in the Lebanese city of Zahle in April 1981. When the Syrians responded, the Christians warned Begin that the loss of Zahle to Syria would open the roads through the mountains to Beirut, leaving the Christians defenseless. Despite warnings to the contrary, Begin sent the air force to shoot down two Syrian helicopters as a warning, an action that prompted Syria to deploy SAM 6 missiles in south Lebanon, which further aggravated Israel. Only desperate US diplomatic efforts prevented tensions from boiling over.

“Having achieved his aim in precipitating a crisis, Bashir Gemayel [the Maronite leader] quietly capitulated and pulled his men out of the city [Zahle].”³⁰

The period during 1981 saw an intensification of Israel’s military activity, and on 28 May, with Israeli elections approaching, “Begin approved the Chief of Staff’s request to renew the bombing of PLO concentrations in South Lebanon. The immediate purpose of the attacks was political; the long range goal was to effect a controlled escalation of tension and ultimately trigger the war that Eitan [*Chief of Staff*] believed was destined to be fought within half a year, at most.”³¹ Initial PLO responses were measured, fearing a disproportionate Israeli response; however, after six weeks of intermittent bombing, the PLO responded by shelling the Israeli town of Nahariya on 15 July. No Israeli injuries were recorded. In reply, Israel bombed Beirut, killing over 100 and injuring more than 600 Lebanese civilians.

Although incapable of responding in kind, the PLO abandoned restraint and fired artillery and rockets across northern Israel, killing six and injuring fifty-nine Israelis. Despite the relative inaccuracy of the PLO fire, northern Israel was thrown into a state of confusion with approximately 40 percent of the large town of Kiryat Shmona fleeing south; “never had Israel witnessed such a mass exodus from a settlement under attack.”³² By the end of 1981, the stage had been set for the invasion of Lebanon, including the makeup and demeanor of the Israeli government.

Begin’s first government had included the likes of Yigael Yadin, Ezer Weizman and Moshe Dayan, three experienced military men whose advice restrained otherwise imprudent cabinet decisions regarding ill-advised military ventures. His newly elected government of 1981, however, included Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, Foreign Minister

Yitzhak Shamir, Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, and Israel's Ambassador to the USA Moshe Arens--a hawkish group who saw military means as the most appropriate tool for all political solutions. As if to highlight this fact, Mordechai Zippori publicly admonished Cabinet that it had lost control of events in the north as early as the summer of 1981 and that it was blundering into a war that would include the Syrians. Zippori pointed out that "Eitan and his staff in the field were making operational decisions without authorization."³³ A later example of this was the disparity in objectives as set out in an Israeli Cabinet meeting on 10 May 1982 and a special meeting of the General Staff held on 13 May. Whereas the Cabinet had decided on a limited war focussed on the PLO and avoiding contact with the Syrians, the General Staff focussed on the "Big Pines" plan that involved engaging the Syrians in battle.³⁴ Clearly, a military solution to the PLO problem in Lebanon was the only solution seriously considered by the Begin Government.

Summary

In summary, Israel's political objectives for Operation Litani had not been met, due largely to the fact that the objectives were unclear from the outset, and the allocated military forces, tactics and force structure utilized were insufficient to achieve the stated goals. In addition, the motivation of revenge and disproportionate response to a mix of nuisance PLO attacks, except for the bus hijacking, proved poor reasoning for a not insubstantial military intervention in Lebanon. The failure to attack Tyre and Sidon and provide a cutoff force north of these centers enabled an easy PLO withdrawal to Beirut and succeeded only in reducing but not ending PLO attacks on northern Israel.

Ambiguous political objectives created a vacuum, in which the military began to initiate

the political agenda with respect to events in south Lebanon. Furthermore, Israel's experience of the PLO's tactics showed that in the event of a future intervention in Lebanon, the enemy would most likely employ guerilla tactics in terrain and social settings not conducive to conventional warfare. Accordingly, Israel was unsuccessful in destroying the PLO or even in moving it out of south Lebanon.

The period between 1978 and December 1981, following Operation Litani, witnessed continued instability in Lebanon and attempts by the Maronite dominated Christian government to woo a sympathetic protector in the Israeli Prime minister, Menachem Begin. The partnership to be forged was based on Israel's desire to install a sympathetic government on its northern borders, and a shared desire with Lebanon to dislodge or destroy the PLO and to remove the Syrians from Lebanon.

Both the PLO and Syria largely appear to have attempted to avoid confrontation with the more powerful Israeli military during this period, with many responses being the result of provocation. Continued Israeli operations resulted, however, in intended and expected responses, particularly from the PLO. The inevitable PLO rejoinder against disproportionate Israeli retaliation resulted in significant, if relatively ineffective, attacks on the Galilee panhandle that resulted in a large-scale exodus of civilians to the south of Israel. This, in turn, ensured that the Israeli psyche was ripe for retribution. With this stage set, a hawkish Israeli government planned for an invasion of Lebanon.

¹Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 402.

²Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1995), 142.

³*Ibid.*, 19.

⁴William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon* (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1997), 5.

⁵Yair Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 14.

⁶*Ibid.*, 23.

⁷*Ibid.*, 21.

⁸*Ibid.*, 46.

⁹*Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 76.

¹²*Ibid.*, 77.

¹³Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 24.

¹⁴Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 56.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁶Depuy and Martell, *Flawed Victory* (Fairfax Virginia: Hero Books, 1986), 56.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive* (New York: BBS Public Affairs, 1998), 288.

²⁰Beate Hamizrachi, *The Emergence of the South Lebanon Security Belt: Major Saad Haddad and the Ties with Israel, 1975-1978* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 164.

²¹Gabriel, 51, 52 and 56,

²²Walid Khalidi. *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1979), 138.

²³*Ibid.*, 128.

²⁴Britannica.com Inc., (article on-line); available from www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/0/0,5716; Internet.

²⁵Khalidi, 140.

²⁶Hamizrachi, 164.

²⁷Evron, 98.

²⁸Schiff and Ya'ari, 25.

²⁹Ibid., 26.

³⁰Ibid., 35.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 36.

³³Ibid., 40.

³⁴Ibid., 55-56.

CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF LEBANON

No one starts a war, or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so, without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The former is its political purpose; the latter, its operational objective.¹

von Clausewitz

Introduction

The previous chapter alluded to the apparent differences in objectives between the Israeli Cabinet and the General Staff and several key Israeli government ministers with regard to the likely invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The aim of this chapter is to examine these political differences and assess the ramifications both at the time of the invasion and subsequently. Whilst much of the political discussion is based on the circumstances surrounding the 1982 period, it will also explore the impact of the following eighteen years in Lebanon on the political decision of Israel to withdraw in May 2000. It is worth briefly looking at the attitudes of the aforementioned Israeli political players at the time in order to understand their historical approach to Arab-Israeli political issues since 1948.

It should be remembered that prior to 1982 Israel had successfully fought at least four major wars in twenty-five years with its Arab neighbors. It therefore had little incentive to believe that diplomacy alone could solve its disagreements with them or was even necessary, given the outstanding successes of its previous military victories. In conjunction with the historical impact of the holocaust on the Israeli psyche, previous attacks by the Arab armies in 1948 and 1973 encouraged a siege mentality within Israel

in which it felt itself being forced to forever fight for its national survival. Coupled with its own predilection for preemptive action as shown in the 1956 and 1967 conflicts, and its repeated military successes, it would seem that certain key Israeli leaders like Menachim Begin and Ariel Sharon were at least increasingly becoming predisposed to war as the only means of achieving their objectives in relation to the conflict in Lebanon rather than seeking a political solution. This is particularly so given the prevailing belief that the Arab nations only understand the use of force.

Israeli authors Dan Bavly and Eliahu Salpeter, highlighting the prevailing Israeli Herut philosophy that “the use of force could resolve political deadlock,” also support this perception. This philosophy was given public voice by Chief of Staff General Rafael Eitan and political impetus by Prime Minister Menachem Begin.² Uri Savir, Israel’s chief negotiator with the PLO from 1993 to 1996, also identified this trait when speaking with regard to the conflict with Hezbollah in 1996. Savir laments Israel’s predicament and states, “It was clear that we had to act, yet we could be drawn into the kind of deep military engagements that were not necessarily in our long-term interests but appeared unavoidable in the absence of an immediate alternative to our deeply ingrained belief that there is a military solution to every problem.”³

As if to reinforce this concept, in 1973, the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had previously expounded what is referred to as the “Israeli Security Theory” which he believed to be the major obstacle to peace at that time.

According to Egyptian analysis, the Israeli Security Theory was founded upon the Israelis’ firm belief that the IDF could deter any Arab attempts to regain lost territories through military actions. This article of faith carried political implications for the Arab-Israeli conflict: the Israeli government, believing in the invincibility of its armed forces, would continue to refuse to negotiate with the

Arabs other than from a position of strength from which the Israelis could then dictate peace terms. In other words, military supremacy and political arrogance had spawned a diplomatic stalemate.⁴

It should be remembered, however, that the military is simply one instrument in a government's arsenal, but is rarely a solution in itself. M. Thomas Davis notes that: "A nation's decision to fight should come after careful consideration of the purpose for the introduction of military forces and of the risks involved; of the demonstrated or perceived inability to secure the desired objectives through other means; and of the probability of success."⁵ Roger Trinquier expounded a related theory when he wrote that warfare is an interlocking system of actions, political, economic, psychological, and military and that military operations against opposing armed forces are of only limited importance and are never the total conflict.⁶ The prevailing environment in which the Israeli propensity for using military force as the solution to essentially political problems in Lebanon and, as will be seen, for political primacy to be subordinate to military initiative, would be considered anathema to Clausewitz, who expounded directly opposing dictums.

In addition to this, the Israeli politicians of the time engaged a general philosophy regarding the existence of the Palestinians. Most had grown up believing that by migrating to Palestine, "Zionists had to believe, as the saying at the time went, that they were a people without a land coming to a land without a people."⁷ Further, many Israelis believed that there was no such thing as a legitimate Palestinian nation with a legitimate national claim to any part of Palestine, seeing them rather as part of the greater Arab morass.⁸ A US State Department official confirmed this when he noted, "The Israeli government believes it has a Palestinian problem because of the PLO; not that it has a PLO problem because of the Palestinians."⁹

It was easy, therefore, for Israelis to view all Palestinian resistance as terrorism rather than differentiate between different PLO factions and displaced Palestinian refugees. The PLO was seen only as a gang of terrorists who under no circumstances should have benefited from any political treatment. IDF Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, who believed that the PLO could be destroyed by military means, then translated this ideological concept into an operational thesis.¹⁰ In other words, if the PLO could only be destroyed by military means, then all planning towards dealing with the PLO would be based purely on a military solution. The failure to correctly identify the nature and concerns of the Palestinians in Lebanon decreased the chances that Israel would select the correct objectives and plan for dealing with the problem.

One further point needs to be made in relation to Israel's overall attitude towards the PLO. As far back as 1976, senior Israeli military personnel had stated that a conclusion to the situation could only be reached through a political solution.

Three former Israeli Chiefs of Staff, Yitzak Rabin, Mordecai Gur, and Haim Bar-Lev, had testified before the Knesset that the Palestinian problem could not be solved by conventional military means. The former Chief of Military Intelligence, Major General Shlomo Gazit, had stated earlier that as a terrorist organization and a political phenomenon, the PLO could be controlled, but not destroyed; it could only be dealt with effectively through a political solution.¹¹

Given Israel's military successes to that point, it is difficult to understand why this advice from such experienced military officers appears to have been ignored. Clearly, these officers understood the nature of the Palestinian issue as being essentially a political problem requiring a political solution in order to ensure success. As well, they also understood the limitations of the IDF being a conventional force in trying to deal with an essentially guerilla organization.

Prelude to Invasion

Conspiracy theories abound and flourish in the Middle East; it is a part of life itself in that part of the world. The political events leading up to and surrounding the invasion of Lebanon are no exception to this rule. Most indications suggest that the Israeli decision to invade Lebanon was made at the highest levels in 1981. A brief chronological analysis of key Cabinet meetings and discussions of plans for the invasion make interesting reading and provide evidence of the lack of agreement over the need to invade and the ultimate objectives at the time.

On 20 December 1981, Defence Minister Sharon and Chief of Staff Eitan presented the Israeli Cabinet with a proposal to launch a military operation in Lebanon. The plan presented was the Big Plan that included the penetration of the Beirut-Damascus highway, the landing of Israeli forces north of Beirut thereby encircling the capital, and the removal of Syrian troops by force from Lebanon. Prime Minister Menachem Begin called for the adoption of the proposal; however, the Cabinet rejected this plan. In January 1982, Sharon and Eitan proposed the large-scale air bombardment of PLO concentrations, assuming that this would provoke the PLO to retaliate militarily against northern Israel, thereby serving as the desired pretext for the large-scale operation. The Cabinet again rejected this plan. On 16 February, Begin met with Shimon Peres, the opposition leader, and discussed military action against the PLO in Lebanon. Peres opposed the Big Plan but did not oppose a limited operation. In early March, Begin convened a meeting of ministers at his home where Sharon and Eitan again raised the issue of military action, subsequently rejected by those in attendance.¹²

Begin and Sharon attempted unsuccessfully use a series of incidents in the Spring of 1982 as a pretense for invading Lebanon. On 25 March, a hand grenade was thrown at an Israeli military vehicle in the Gaza Strip. Using this as a pretext for action, Begin, Sharon, and Eitan convened another meeting of leading members of the Cabinet and again proposed bombing PLO concentrations in Lebanon. Suspecting that the real objective was to provoke PLO retaliation, this proposal too was rejected. As a result of the murder of an Israeli diplomat in Paris on 3 April, an air strike was discussed but postponed due to bad weather. On 6 April, Begin and his Cabinet met with the leadership of the opposition. He informed them of the reason for the postponement of the air strike and then pointed out that had the PLO responded, Israel would have launched a ground operation. Sharon noted that Israel's objectives were: (1) the destruction of Palestinian organizations and their infrastructure and their expulsion from Lebanon, (2) the formation of a new regime in Lebanon, and (3) the possible expulsion of Syria from Lebanon, to include cutting the Beirut-Damascus highway and landing troops north of Beirut. All of this was expected to take only 48 hours. The Labour opposition favored a strike on Palestinian positions, but opposed the remaining two objectives.¹³

On 9 April, following the death of an officer killed by a landmine in south Lebanon and amidst considerable opposition within the Cabinet, Israel launched a limited air strike. Aware of the dangers of retaliating, the PLO withheld fire. On 9 May, Israel launched air strikes against PLO concentrations in Lebanon, and this time the PLO responded, albeit ineffectively. The PLO fired about 100 artillery shells into northern Israel; however, there were no deaths or injuries and damage was negligible. Begin again

attempted to use the retaliation as a pretext for a major land campaign, but the Cabinet again opposed the idea.¹⁴

Successive rejections of the Big Plan appear to have resulted in Begin moderating his position, at least publicly. On 16 May he informed the Cabinet that it would not be called upon to decide on its implementation. He did, however, remind them that in the event of an Israeli casualty resulting from terrorist actions, whether inside or outside of Israel, Israel would respond. Whilst the Cabinet assumed that, in any event, a response would not involve war with Syria, the General Staff was already planning for a war that involved both taking Beirut and probably war with Syria.¹⁵ This was later supported by the fact that the IDF had positioned four of its six invading divisions on the axis along which Syrian troops had been situated because Sharon felt that an attack on the Syrians was necessary to preempt a potential attack by Syria in 1983-84.¹⁶ M. Thomas Davis too states that Sharon's "Big Plan envisaged a war against both the PLO and the Syrians clearing them from southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley."¹⁷

The shooting of Shlomo Argov, the Israeli Ambassador to London, on 3 June provided Begin with his opportunity to invade Lebanon. There was, however, a great irony in Begin's decision to invade as a result of this shooting. Most authors agree that, in fact, the shooting was not carried out by the PLO, who denied the attack, but rather by the Abu Nidal group vehemently opposed to Yasser Arafat, which had attempted on occasion to assassinate Arafat and other PLO leaders. On 4 June, Israel launched air strikes against Beirut and south Lebanon; and not surprisingly, the PLO retaliated with artillery into northern Israel killing one civilian.

This turned out to be the provocation required, and on 5 June Begin again proposed a military operation. Sharon and Eitan presented the Cabinet with the “Small Plan,” which was an operation in south Lebanon only. This included no advance to Beirut and no move against the Syrians.¹⁸ Israel subsequently invaded Lebanon on Saturday, 6 June 1982. Two things, however, are certain: there was no consensus on the decision to invade Lebanon utilizing the Big Plan objectives, as has been shown by Cabinet’s repeated rebuffs of the Begin-Sharon proposals; and Begin, Sharon, and Eitan deceived the Israeli Cabinet and, in effect, the Israeli population as to their true intent in Lebanon.

Stated Objectives, Assumptions and Deception

The official version of the Cabinet’s decision regarding Israel’s objectives was announced as follows:

The IDF is instructed to place the civilian population of the Galilee beyond the range of the fire of the terrorists who are concentrated there, their headquarters and their bases in Lebanon

The name of the operation is Peace for Galilee.

During the operation the Syrian army will not be attacked unless it attacks our forces.

Israel aspires to the signing of a peace treaty with an independent Lebanon, while preserving its territorial integrity.¹⁹

Begin also made it quite clear that he intended attacking no farther than forty kilometers north of the border, a point that further reinforced the understanding that there was no intention of pushing to Beirut or in engaging the Syrians. In appearance, Begin was employing the Small Plan. It is worth analyzing these stated objectives closer in order to understand the assumptions behind them and their actual veracity, particularly in

the context of the PLO and Syrian positions. Only one of the aforementioned objectives was a “specific objective,” that being driving the PLO beyond artillery range and attacking PLO headquarters. The remaining objectives refer only to a hope of avoiding war with Syria and a desire to sign a peace treaty with Lebanon, both nonspecific objectives. These latter “objectives” were not achievable by military means.

The use of military means instigated an engagement with Syrian forces rather than avoiding it, and signing a peace treaty with Lebanon was surely only ultimately possible through political means, particularly given that Lebanon was not at war with Israel. Although military pressure may be able to compel compliance, it had continually proven to be an ineffective method for Israel in its prior wars with the Arab states that would not be coerced into peace treaties despite military defeat. Ironically, Israel’s peace treaty with Egypt was as much a result of Sadat’s desire to achieve a negotiated peace as opposed to having peace dictated to the Arabs.

The first objective instructed the IDF to place the civilian population of the Galilee beyond the range of PLO fire and their headquarters and bases in Lebanon. There is a significant contradiction in this objective. Numerous observers have noted that the PLO military buildup, which comprised mostly very old and inferior equipment, did not present a significant threat to Israeli security, despite causing some Israeli casualties, a point that had been repeatedly proven through the PLO’s ineffective artillery raids on the Galilee.²⁰ Notwithstanding this point, this objective was perhaps the most appealing to the entire cabinet. After all, who could argue with the aim of removing the PLO from within artillery range of the Galilee? In concert with Begin’s repeated claims of not

pushing further north than forty kilometers, this was an attractive objective and easy to sell and defend.

On closer investigation, however, this objective refers to the terrorist headquarters in Lebanon which, as most were aware, was situated in Beirut. Evidently, Begin had every intention of entering Beirut, but carefully hid his purpose behind the claim of removing the PLO from artillery range of Galilee and not moving further north than forty kilometers. In addition, the deployment of almost six divisions to complete the task of removing the PLO, which should have required no more than two divisions, should have raised Cabinet concerns regarding Sharon's true intent.²¹

It seems likely that Begin's intent to push to Beirut was based on the mistaken assumption that the Phalangists would undertake the majority of the fighting within Beirut once the Israelis had arrived on the outskirts, a supposition based on Eitan's discussions with Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel prior to the invasion. Ironically, this view was strongly contradicted by the Mossad and military intelligence, which expressed diametrically opposed views to Eitan some months prior to June 1982. In fact, Gemayel had himself expressed significant doubts as to the Phalangists' willingness to assist the Israelis, based on their need to appease both the Syrians and the greater Arab world.²² In reality, Gemayel hoped that Israel would do his dirty work and single-handedly remove the troublesome PLO and the Syrians from Lebanon.

The second key objective stated that during the operation, the Syrian Army would not be attacked unless it attacked Israeli forces. Under closer inspection, this objective lacks credibility. The greatest number of Israeli forces assembled for the invasion were not deployed against the PLO, but rather positioned opposite Syrian forces. Syria

employed all avenues, including political, diplomatic, and military, to indicate its intent to avoid war with Israel; however, because of the disposition of the Israeli forces, the Syrian forces now stood in the path of four Israeli divisions.²³

Even on the battlefield, once Israel crossed the border, Syria attempted to avoid engagement. Syrian forces withdrew immediately from checkpoints in Tyre and Sidon²⁴ and moved forces in the Shouf Mountains back from the road to Beirut. Initially, the Syrians made no attempt to station forces south of Beirut until the fourth day of the attack, when battle became inevitable, and made no aggressive moves against the main Israeli forces massed in front of them in the Bekaa. The Syrians were acutely aware that they were militarily incapable of matching the Israelis, who outnumbered them two to one, and that confrontation with them made no sense whatsoever.²⁵ Although some might speculate that Begin was hoping that the Syrians would simply withdraw on seeing the Israelis driving towards them, this would seem most unlikely, given the political stakes at the time. Unquestionably, Israel was aware that one of the strategic reasons for Syria's deployment in the Bekaa was to protect its important western approach from Israeli invasion; therefore, the above speculation appears even more forlorn.

It would appear that Begin's main assumption for dragging Syria into the war was based on the belief that the expulsion of Syria was critical to the successful implementation of a new administration in Lebanon. If Syria was not decisively engaged it would have no reason to depart and would remain entrenched within Lebanon. The only way Israel could ensure Syria's departure was by defeating it militarily and driving it out of Lebanon altogether, thereby breaking Syria's political stranglehold. Consequently, with Syria attempting to avoid battle, it was Israel that first launched

attacks at surface-to-air missile (SAM) batteries, thereby rendering hollow Begin's comments about avoiding confrontation with Syria.

The third stated key political objective declared that Israel aspired to the signing of a peace treaty with an independent Lebanon, while preserving its territorial integrity. By necessity, this objective was dependent upon the success of the two previous objectives, assuming that Israel really did intend to engage and remove Syrian forces. Given that Begin had publicly stated that he sought to avoid war with Syria and that the only specific objective, therefore, was the removal of the PLO to a position forty kilometers north of the border, there seems to have been little logical hope that this final objective could be achieved. After all, if battle with the Syrians was avoided and Syria remained in Lebanon and the PLO were pushed beyond artillery range of the Galilee, what motivation or likelihood was there of Lebanon, an Arab state, either choosing to or being allowed to sign a peace treaty with Israel? Clearly, Israel was relying upon the upcoming election to have Bashir Gemayel confirmed as President, assuming that he would support the Israeli position. This failure to understand Lebanese politics and the need for Bashir to play the Israelis off against the Syrians was a significant oversight.

Although events leading up to and including the early days of the invasion showed clearly that Begin and Sharon's true intent was the objectives of the Big Plan, in order to deceive Cabinet and the public, Small Plan strategy was employed initially. As a result, this precluded the landing of forces north of Beirut and heliborne operations to cut the Beirut-Damascus highway, and involved the postponement of the main attack on the Syrian forces until the fourth day.²⁶ Notwithstanding this, by 9 June, four days after the invasion, Israel had engaged the Syrians and directed one of its divisions to link up with

the Phalangists in East Beirut, both in direct contravention of its publicly stated objectives.²⁷

Begin and Sharon's True Objectives for the
1982 Invasion of Lebanon

In effect, by 14 June, Israel had enacted many of the objectives of the Big Plan. The Syrians in Lebanon had withdrawn into the Bekaa and had been neutralized in terms of real opposition to the IDF, and the potential for the destruction of the PLO's headquarters and infrastructure in Beirut appeared within reach. Accordingly, Israel publicly altered its war objectives on 14 June to correspond more closely to the original aims of Begin and Sharon's Big Plan.

It insisted that:

All foreign armies (including the PLO) withdraw from Lebanon.
A new Lebanese government be formed.
The new government sign a peace treaty with Israel.²⁸

Whilst these restated objectives initially appear almost altruistic for Israel and Lebanon, more rigorous investigation reveals significant difficulties. Once again, only the first objective could be achieved directly by military means, which is not to say that the military option was the only workable option for the achievement of this objective. Bashir Gemayel had already declared that his Phalangist forces would take little part in the direct fighting. This meant that Israel would have to fight urban-guerilla warfare in a battle for Beirut over a sustained period of time if it were to militarily defeat the PLO who could not be bypassed if Israel were to achieve its objectives. This was exactly the type of conflict they had avoided in Tyre and Sidon in 1978 due to its likely cost in Israeli lives. It would also result in the loss of the lives of many Lebanese civilians, many of

whom never displayed any support for the PLO or the Palestinian plight, as well as arousing internal and international condemnation.

Correspondingly, it would also require the degrading of Israeli forces in the east containing the main Syrian force in order to bolster the costly effort in Beirut. Although the first restated objective cited the intention for the withdrawal of all foreign forces, it was well known as far back as October 1981 that Sharon's true intent was the destruction of the PLO.²⁹ In so doing, he believed that he would also weaken the Palestinians to such an extent so as to leave them without effective political power, allowing Israel to readily annex the West Bank and end the opposition there, thus solving two problems in one. Despite Sharon's recommendations to conduct a ground campaign within Beirut, the Israeli Cabinet and many within the military rejected the proposition of a direct assault on West Beirut, opting instead for a siege coupled with artillery bombardments and air strikes. This decision was to have significant political ramifications of its own in relation to the opinions of the Israeli and international communities, a factor the Israeli Cabinet had not apparently accounted for at the time.

Another consequence of the "Beirut siege" option that it began to turn the mainly Muslim population of West Beirut against the Israelis and the Maronites. The destruction of the PLO was acceptable to many Lebanese who resented the state-within-a-state, however, the deaths of thousands of innocent Lebanese civilians, most of whom were Muslim, was not. The political support of mainly Sunni Muslims would be required by Israel and Bashir Gemayel and was essential to ensuring the achievement of the remaining two objectives.

A further unintended repercussion of the siege option was that the siege and indiscriminate bombardment of Beirut over six weeks actually focused the world's attention on the Palestinian plight. In many ways, this result, coupled with the deaths of so many Israeli soldiers (368 killed and 2,383 wounded by the end of the siege), was worth the expulsion of the PLO to the Palestinians and could indirectly be considered a successful outcome for the Palestinian movement. Despite the fact that the siege and bombardment had some success in forcing the PLO to the bargaining table and that the PLO had even agreed to an American-sponsored initiative to accept expulsion to Arab states, in early August Israeli troops moved to attack and occupy areas of western Beirut. Sharon was aware that allowing the PLO to be expelled would result in a failure to achieve his true intent of totally destroying the PLO and leave the Palestinian Problem unsolved.

For some time, a group of ministers had been increasingly unhappy about the course of the war and particularly about the role of the Defense Minister. They felt that the Cabinet was merely following events rather than directing them. Some Cabinet members were angered when they learnt unofficially that a few days earlier Israel had mobilized an additional reserve unit and moved it into the Maronite mini-state in the north-east of Beirut. This move was not authorized by the Cabinet.³⁰

On 12 August, despite a request by Sharon for another military operation, Begin and the Cabinet not only rejected his proposal but also decided to cease the shelling of Beirut. It is ironic that by late August Yasser Arafat and many of his PLO guerillas had been expelled from Lebanon, not so much by Israeli military force as by US mediation, that is, political diplomacy. Even if it is assumed that Israel was successful in accomplishing the first objective, the question of the other two objectives remained.

These were fundamentally political objectives that could not be solved simply by the military attainment of the first objective or by military means.

Worse was to follow for Israel as Bashir Gemayel, the Phalangist leader upon whom Israel had pinned all its hopes to reunite Lebanon and act as Israel's proxy, was assassinated on 14 September. The assassination showed the weakness in Israel's overall political thinking regarding Lebanon. How could it possibly have hoped to establish an acceptable and legitimate government in Lebanon, a fragmented nation at the best of times, when the not unlikely assassination of a single individual without the backing of a significant proportion of the government or the people was the centerpiece of its plan? After all, Bashir's bloody past and his image of recklessness and extremism rendered national rapprochement under his leadership a highly questionable proposition at best, particularly in this land of vendettas.³¹ There was now little hope that any of the three restated objectives could be achieved.

Perhaps the saddest of all events was yet, however, to unfold. The assassination of Gemayel encouraged the IDF to initiate a new move into West Beirut where PLO camps were cordoned off by the IDF and rendered inaccessible to any militia without IDF approval. With most other options exhausted, Israel appears to have decided that only preponderant military power could now achieve any semblance of control.³² This is something of a paradox given that it was the use of the military option that placed Israel in this predicament in the first place.

On 18 September the world awoke to the news of a massacre of Palestinian civilians in two refugee camps known as Sabra and Chatilla. Israel would be blamed for negligence, if not complicity, in this event.³³ The ramifications of this incident will be

discussed in chapter 4. As a consequence of the international outcry over the massacre, Israel was forced to withdraw from West Beirut and was replaced by units of the Multinational Force.

When the Israeli invasion began in June 1982, 93.3 percent of Israelis considered the invasion as either definitely or reservedly justified. After a month of the war, however, the mood had shifted and support was down to 66 percent. On the evening of 25 September, police estimated that 400,000 people, one-ninth of Israel's Jewish population, demonstrated in a Tel Aviv square against Israel's continued occupation of Lebanon following the Sabra and Chatilla massacres. By December, public support for the Invasion had dropped to 34 percent.³⁴

Israeli Policy, Post-1982

Israeli policy regarding Lebanon from late 1982 until 1985 was without direction. The Begin government felt compelled to cling to its objectives as defined after the first week of the invasion, for to do otherwise was to admit failure. Unfortunately, the consequences of this inability to acknowledge failure were exacerbated by Israel's decision to remain in Lebanon. Following Israel's failure to achieve a ratified agreement with Lebanon, despite the signing of an initial treaty, the period ending late 1982 saw an increase in guerilla activities against the IDF by mostly Palestinian remnants. These attacks only served to reinforce Israeli public opposition to the IDF's continued occupancy of Lebanon, as well as the overall failure of the invasion.

Following the dispersal of much of the PLO to eight different Arab countries, the IDF withdrew to the Awali River just north of Sidon, as another consequence of Israel's actions began to manifest itself. The expulsion of significant elements of the PLO

leadership and fighting force had freed the largest proportion of the Lebanese population, the Shiites, from PLO dominance. They quickly turned their attention towards their new occupiers, who seemingly were settling in south Lebanon in what appeared to be an annexation.

Yitzhak Rabin once ruefully commented that Israel's invasion of Lebanon had "let the Shiites out of the bottle". He declared that the Shiites had the potential for a kind of terrorism that we had not yet experienced. If as a result of the war in Lebanon, we replace PLO terrorism with Shiite terrorism, we have done the worst thing in our struggle against terrorism.³⁵

Rabin's words turned out to be remarkably prophetic. In August 1984, a new Likud-led government began assessing how to extricate itself from Lebanon. Unable to openly admit that Israel had failed in accomplishing its stated objectives, it instead argued that the real purpose had been solely to achieve security for the Galilee, an objective that appeared initially to have been secured. Subsequent events, however, were to prove this to have been yet another failed objective. Almost three years after the invasion, the majority of Israel's troops departed Lebanon. Israel did, however, maintain the "security belt" under the control of the SLA, in which an average of 150 IDF officers and soldiers continued to operate, manning static defensive positions and undertaking regular patrols.

As has been stated, the removal of the majority of the PLO from south Lebanon was of benefit to both the Israelis and the Shiites. The largely secular AMAL movement, headed by Nabih Berri, represented the Shiites' political intentions at this time. AMAL was considered representative of the main stream of the Shiite population in south Lebanon. Believing that the occupying IDF would leave Lebanon after a few months, AMAL initially adopted a moderate stance towards Israel.

Ironically, the Israelis and Shiites wanted the same thing, an end to Palestinian presence and guerilla activity in the south and secure borders. Some Israeli officers suggested cultivating the Shiites and, had this proposal been accepted, this objective would most likely have been achieved. Instead, by championing the minority Maronites, Israel not only missed a crucial opportunity but also turned the Shiites into one of its deadliest enemies. The change in attitude occurred slowly, as the Shiites became increasingly aware that Israel was displaying a reluctance to abandon Lebanon, despite having driven the majority of the PLO from the south.³⁶

In an attempt to bolster the ranks of the SLA, Israel began recruiting from villages in southern Lebanon. When insufficient numbers resulted, Israel began pressuring civilians, threatening to imprison some and failing to release other family members already imprisoned.³⁷ During his time in Lebanon, the author encountered numerous cases supporting the above statement. Such was the effect of this policy that by 1997, many south Lebanese villages consisted of no males between the ages of 14-60. This pressure even extended to local Lebanese UN interpreters who were regularly threatened by the SLA and IDF. As an incentive, Israel also offered social and financial assistance to the impoverished villagers if sons and fathers enlisted with the SLA. From this point onwards, the Israelis, who had earlier been identified as liberators, were now considered occupiers.

The alarm bells began to ring in a community, which was renowned for its fierce sense of independence. Turning a blind eye to Israel's trespass on their land for the sake of the common aim of expelling the PLO was one thing, but becoming their surrogates and allowing Israeli domination of their lives and territory was totally unacceptable to the Shiites. They had, after all, fought their Muslim Palestinian brothers for those very reasons. The mistrust awakened years of

dormant fear that Israel had the same designs on South Lebanon as it had had on Jordan's West Bank and on Syria's Golan Heights.³⁸

The Shiites had learned one thing from the Palestinians, fighting was the only way to prevent Israel from taking their land. Above all, they could not abandon homes and villages. Confrontation and opposition were seen as the only answer.

The "resistance" was a spontaneous movement, which was started in the summer of 1982 by a small group of Lebanese civilians motivated by a sense of nationalism and rejection of Israeli domination. Iran sent approximately 1,500 Iranian Revolutionary Guards even at this early period to the Bekaa Valley to train and support the movement. Its growth was sustained by a series of tit-for-tat reprisals between the IDF and the resistance in the form of raids on Lebanese villages and bombings of Israeli convoys using vehicles packed with explosives. As was often the case with the Palestinians, Israeli reprisals simply rallied further support for the resistance and larger numbers of people joined its ranks. In 1985, Hezbollah (The Party of God) officially announced its existence, both in the form of a political movement and a military wing known as the Islamic Resistance (IR). It derived its influence, funding and zeal from the radical Iranian Islamic movement rather than from the more secular AMAL.³⁹

Hezbollah was a political movement, as well as a military one, having representatives in the Lebanese parliament by 1992 and operating a network of religious, educational, medical and welfare institutions over much of Lebanon. Accordingly, there could be no question of eradicating it simply by attacking its 400-500 hard-core fighters concentrated in the south. Considered a native Lebanese movement, Hezbollah's declared objective was always to remove the Israeli presence from conquered Lebanese

soil. Furthermore, as long as it directed its efforts against Israel, it could always count on Syrian assistance.⁴⁰

This was yet another case of a Middle East relationship based on a mutually shared objective or end-state as opposed to ideological similarities. This was particularly so given the enmity between Syria and Hezbollah's chief supporter, Iran, both of whom were united only by their mutual distrust of Iraq. Amazingly, as the "Lebanese Problem" continued into the 1990s, the cycle of escalation continued, much as it had done during the "Palestinian Problem". Official Israeli sources state that Hezbollah attacks increased from approximately 25 per year during 1990 to 350 per year by 1995.⁴¹ Between October 1997 and October 1998 however, Hezbollah had launched just under 1300 attacks during this 12-month period, an average of almost four attacks per day.

As the Hezbollah attacks and Israeli retaliations deteriorated into a routine, [Prime Minister] Peres was forced to respond. On the advice of the military, he proposed to the Cabinet a military operation (Grapes of Wrath 1996) based on air force strikes against targets deep in Lebanon, including terrorist headquarters in Beirut. After the Cabinet had approved the operation, I passed a note to Yossi Beilin expressing concern that the cycle of violence would play into the hands of those in Israel who advocated solutions by force. The problem, as I saw it, was that, after having sustained so many casualties, Israel was becoming a victim of its own vulnerability to terror. It was clear that we had to act, yet we could be drawn into the type of deep military engagements that were not necessarily in our long-term interests but appeared unavoidable in the absence of an immediate alternative to our deeply ingrained belief that there is a military solution to every problem. The fundamentalists now had us playing their game on their court.⁴²

The above figures again show the fallacy of the effectiveness of a military solution to Israel's problem with Hezbollah whose attacks increased fourfold following Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996. Israel had again displayed an inability to understand the true nature of the problem and its enemy and of the methodology required to achieve a solution. Hezbollah was a political movement, not a terrorist movement, with

legitimate claims that needed to be dealt with politically. In addition, Hezbollah's military wing at least became "multiconfessional" in that it included Christians as well as Muslims, both determined to rid Lebanon of Israeli occupation. This was a recent phenomenon that only became public in 1997 during the author's time in south Lebanon and about which little has been written.

Indeed, Hezbollah created a separate group known as the Lebanese Resistance Brigades (LRB) consisting almost entirely of Christians who attacked/operated in exactly the same manner as Muslim guerilla squads. The "security zone" was anything but a secure area as Hezbollah guerillas struck both the SLA and the IDF daily within this area. Additionally, as a result of the 1996 April Understanding, Hezbollah would fire katyushas into Israel only when Lebanese civilians were killed or injured. The political imperative of establishing a security or buffer zone had, therefore, also turned out to be a failure. It clearly did not prevent attacks on Israel (as proven by the statistics). In fact, by virtue of the fact that it kept Israel in Lebanon, it was the reason that Hezbollah existed (as proven by the fact that Hezbollah only came into existence as a result of Israel remaining in Lebanon after the invasion). It was a counterproductive policy.

In 1996, *Jane's Intelligence Review* noted further evidence of the IDF's propensity for apparently provoking Hezbollah attacks without first gaining political approval. Referring to Major General Levine, Head of Northern Command it stated, "He has carried out what some term 'trigger-happy tactics' in southern Lebanon, provoking Hezbollah barrages of katyusha rockets on Israel's northern settlements. He has been rebuked several times but remains in command."⁴³

Another political error committed by Israel was the belief that by causing death and suffering to Lebanese civilians, these same people, and the Lebanese government, would eventually turn against the Hezbollah and blame them for their predicament. In February 1985, after withdrawing to the Litani River and in response to repeated attacks by Shiite Resistance fighters, Israel declared an “Iron Fist” policy over the security zone in an attempt to control all movement within the region by force. In doing so, Israel established free fire zones and launched raids on villages, rounding up hundreds of suspected civilians and killing some in the process. In addition, the homes of families refusing to cooperate with the IDF were often destroyed.⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch conducted an investigation and compiled a 91-page report on Laws of War Violations subsequent to Israel’s assault on southern Lebanon during Operation Accountability in July 1993. The report criticizes both protagonists for their actions, but is particularly scathing of the deliberate Israeli tactic of targeting civilians. It states that 120 Lebanese civilians were killed and close to 500 injured in Israeli assaults on population centers in southern Lebanon, whilst some 300,000 villagers were displaced during the seven-day operation. Retaliatory Hezbollah attacks killed 2 Israeli civilians and injured 24.⁴⁵

According to statements made by Israeli civilian and military leaders, the purpose of the military operation was twofold. One was to punish Hezbollah (and the militant Palestinian factions directly). This was done through attacks on military targets, including bases, gun emplacements, and moving guerilla groups, as well as on the homes of Hezbollah leaders. The second purpose was to make it difficult for Hezbollah to continue using southern Lebanon as a base for attacking Israeli forces in the area occupied by Israel. This was done, as a stated goal, by deliberately inflicting serious damage on villages in southern Lebanon, through massive shelling which would raise the cost to the population of permitting Hezbollah to live and operate in its midst. The operation was also designed to create a refugee flow in the direction of Beirut so as to put pressure on the central government to rein in the guerillas. To the extent that civilians were the immediate targets of this military assault to sow terror and induce behavior that

would serve Israel's political goals, Israel was in grave violation of international humanitarian law.⁴⁶

Despite the UN Security Council's protestations, Yitzak Rabin, in a special Knesset meeting to debate the effect of Israel's bombardments, publicly reiterated his conviction that the flood of an estimated 200,000 refugees would ultimately compel the Lebanese authorities and the Syrian government to pressure the Hezbollah to cease its attacks on IDF troops.⁴⁷ The intentional targeting of civilians, in fact, backfired, particularly as Hezbollah's "social wing" would at once visit families with destroyed or damaged houses and ensure their reconstruction almost immediately.

During Operations Accountability and Grapes of Wrath, hundreds of Lebanese civilians were killed and hundreds of thousands rendered as refugees as Israel pursued its tactic of targeting civilians. Once again, however, Israel failed to take into account another politically decisive factor, the media. The air bombing and artillery attacks on Lebanese villages left not only many casualties but also a firm imprint on the psyche of the international audiences. The normally pro-Israel Western media, as well as a not insignificant proportion of the Israeli media, were now finding it difficult to support Israeli actions in the face of clear evidence of Israel's policy of causing civilian casualties.

The most significant example of this took place in what has become known as the Qana (Cana) Massacre on 18 April 1996 in the small Lebanese village of Qana. After Hezbollah guerillas fired upon an Israeli patrol north of the security zone, Israel responded by firing tank and artillery at a UN base in which Lebanese villagers had taken refuge. 109 civilians were killed in the UN compound that was situated on the edge of the small town. A UN investigation, published the following month, concluded that it

was unlikely that the Israelis had hit the base in error. Amnesty International issued its own report in July and declared that the attack had been intentional.⁴⁸ This attack had a similar effect on Israeli self-esteem as the Sabra and Chatilla massacre had had in 1982, and resulted in domestic and international condemnation of both the Israeli government and the IDF. As if to underscore the unpopularity of the governments policies in Lebanon, Shimon Peres lost the next Israeli election the following month.

Perhaps the final indignation regarding Israel's Lebanon policy was the publicly acknowledged legitimacy of Hezbollah by Israel. On 26 April 1996, Israel accepted the US mediated Grapes of Wrath Cease-Fire Understanding, which set out the rules for IDF-Hezbollah military engagements within the security zone. As a result, Israel negotiated openly with Hezbollah and agreed that neither party would be precluded from exercising the right of self-defense.⁴⁹ The agreement negotiated by diplomats in 1996 definitively entail the right of the Lebanese to resist occupation, provided the guerillas do not attack Israeli territory.⁵⁰ Further, an Israeli military press release quoted in the *Israeli Ma'ariv Newspaper* on 28 April 1996 stated that "Hizbullah [sic] has the right to continue operating against the IDF in the Security Zone of Southern Lebanon."⁵¹

Until recently, academic scholars, government officials, and military officers considered the Hezbollah movement a terror group. However, the media and the IDF have begun referring to the Hezbollah as a guerilla organization, thus indicating a change in perception, representing a significant development in the Southern Lebanon war and the growing threat that the Hezbollah imposes on IDF troops.⁵²

By so doing, Israel had publicly legitimized Hezbollah's right to resist the occupation of its territory and, accordingly, admitted political culpability for remaining in Lebanon. By implication, the US and the UN had also legitimized Hezbollah and officially accepted its right to be treated as guerilla fighters resisting occupation and not

terrorists. Hezbollah could now claim victory in the propaganda war. “It is noteworthy that in the course of negotiations Israel has never challenged the right of Hezbollah to attack its soldiers in Lebanon. Thus, they have tacitly conceded that the IDF is an occupation force in Lebanon.”⁵³ This point in itself has made it hard for Israeli families to understand the legitimacy of remaining in Lebanon and the value in losing Israeli lives.

Slowly, Israeli politicians, the IDF, and international organizations began referring to Hezbollah fighters as guerillas and not just as terrorists. This was an extraordinary admission on behalf of Israel's politicians in that it rendered their reasons and objectives for remaining in Lebanon fallacious. Ehud Barak, Israeli Prime Minister at that time, addressed this issue when asked about his reasoning for withdrawing from Lebanon saying, “I reduced significantly the legitimacy to shoot at us once we are (*back*) within the borders of Israel.”⁵⁴

Many political commentators have speculated that a major reason for Barak's ascension to the position of prime minister was based on his promise to withdraw from Lebanon, a considerable irony given that he had been the Chief of Staff for three years during Israel's occupation of Lebanon. Barak admitted that the only real solution to the Lebanon problem was a political one and that the security zone had been a liability.⁵⁵ As if in final condemnation of Ariel Sharon's objectives, “[a]fter 22 years of foreign military occupation, Israel for the first time withdrew as a direct result of armed attacks without even a cease fire agreement or a Security Council Resolution.”⁵⁶

Summary

A variety of political factors combined over a period of 18 years resulting in Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. These factors extended across two wars, one with the

Palestinians culminating in 1982, and one with the Hezbollah stretching from 1983 until 2000. Many of the errors committed in the war with the Palestinians were repeated in the war with Hezbollah; in addition, many of the reasons for Israel's withdrawal in 2000 were the result of political factors whose roots were initiated in 1982. These factors were no more important in 2000 than they were in 1982, it simply took Israel 18 years to acknowledge and respond to them. It is worth summarizing these factors in an attempt to appreciate their overall effect.

The attitudes of Israeli politicians in 1982 were philosophically pre-disposed to military action as being the most appropriate means of solving disputes rather than using political or diplomatic instruments of power. Inextricably linked to this was the fact that, in general, Israel never acknowledged the Palestinians as being a legitimate entity with legitimate territorial concerns, but rather viewed them as terrorists who could and should be dealt with militarily. As a result, Israel's politicians failed to correctly identify the true nature of the problem and, accordingly, chose an inappropriate method of solving it. It is ironic, however, that, although a number of Israeli military officials had correctly identified the issue, Begin and Sharon ignored them.

There was clearly no consensus for the invasion of Lebanon; as evidenced by the numerous proposals put to the Cabinet by Begin and Sharon that were repeatedly rejected. In the end, Begin and Sharon deceived the Cabinet and the public as to their true intent and sought to provoke the PLO into retaliating, thereby justifying an invasion. To ensure support, Begin and Sharon publicly declared "small plan" objectives, yet utilized "big plan" military means. They clearly had "big plan" intentions; however, they

compounded the problem and hamstrung the military by enforcing certain limitations that ultimately prevented the military from satisfactorily achieving the objectives.

The objectives were never clear nor militarily achievable and, worse still, they changed after one week, a clear case of military initiatives driving political policy. This error was exacerbated when Israel realized that it had made a significant and incorrect assumption, i.e., that the Phalange would undertake most of the fighting within Beirut, despite the advice of military intelligence and Mossad and comments made by Bashir himself repudiating this.

The indiscriminate bombardment of Beirut badly affected international and popular Israeli opinion regarding the Palestinian plight and the legitimacy of Israel's attacks and invasion. Paradoxically, despite failing militarily, because of Israel's actions, the Palestinians were successful politically in terms of highlighting their cause internationally, and the tide was unquestionably turning against Israel in relation to the propaganda war. Israel turned the opinion of the Lebanese population against it and it was subsequently viewed as an oppressor rather than liberator, despite the removal of the PLO. The Sabra and Chatilla refugee camp massacres were perhaps the nadir of Israel's intervention in Lebanon, and many consider it the turning point in Israel's loss of credibility in waging war in Lebanon.

By the end of September 1982, Israel had failed to fully achieve any of its objectives, original or subsequent. Much of the PLO had at least been driven from south Lebanon and dispersed amongst various Arab nations, ironically, as a result of political and diplomatic intervention and not as a result of their complete destruction by military means as was intended. More importantly, the PLO had not been destroyed, as was

Sharon's true intent. Israel, however, remained in Lebanon for fear of admitting that it failed to meet its political objectives, thereby conceding the futility of the invasion and the subsequent loss of lives on both sides. This futility however was surpassed by the failure to cultivate the Shiites as allies and to treat them accordingly, which resulted in Israel's creating an even greater enemy in the form of Hezbollah.

The "new political objective" for remaining in Lebanon was declared as ensuring the security of the Galilee. This was to be done by enforcing the security zone, which ultimately only exacerbated the problem. The "cordon sanitaire" turned out to be a counterproductive invention for Israel that not only resulted in the deaths of many of its soldiers but also failed to prevent Hezbollah attacks on the Galilee. It is hard to understand, however, why Israel chose to remain in Lebanon when most of the PLO had already been dispersed throughout the Middle East.

Israel sought to impose itself on the security zone and its inhabitants by repeatedly bombing villages in response to Hezbollah attacks on IDF and SLA troops. Again, Israel was working on the false assumption that this would turn the local population against Hezbollah. On the contrary, this hardened the Shiites' resolve and drove them, along with many Christians, to support and join Hezbollah. As was the case with the Palestinians, deliberate targeting of civilians was an unsuccessful policy. Israel again failed to correctly identify the true nature of the problem by regarding Hezbollah as terrorists rather than as a Lebanese nationalist movement with legitimate claims to the defense of its territory against an occupying force. Hezbollah was a political movement holding parliamentary seats and, as the IDF stated, could not be simply destroyed militarily.

As was the case with Sabra and Chatilla, the massacre at Qana in 1996 greatly affected Israel's political legitimacy both domestically and internationally, and Israel continued losing the propaganda war. In the end, Israel's acceptance of the Grapes of Wrath Understanding affirmed Hezbollah's legitimacy internationally, as well as its right to self-defense, whilst simultaneously undermining Israel's *raison d'être* for remaining in Lebanon.

In conclusion, the private objectives of two or three Israeli politicians broadened the political and strategic objectives of the war and transformed it into a war against Syria for control of Lebanon. Although the IDF initially achieved minor tactical objectives, Israel ultimately lost the wider political battle. Operation Peace for Galilee finished with Lebanon more hostile to Israel than when it began, the PLO replaced by Hezbollah, Syrian influence substantially greater than before, and Israel's international standing significantly sullied. The mismatch between declared political and military objectives predictably resulted in major operational errors because Israel's key thrusts against the Syrians and Beirut never received the priority of attention required for success.⁵⁷ Additionally, "[t]he expediency by which the political establishment allowed the IDF to determine policy in Lebanon, and the IDF's opportunistic exploitation of its role as policy arbiter in the North, grossly violated the crucial distinction which must separate the supply of information data from the work of political decision-making."⁵⁸

Sharon's scheme in 1982 was ultimately a military plan that promised political results, as opposed to a political strategy incorporating the use of military power. No clear, achievable political goals were ever established. Having broken the link between political aims and military means, Israel was almost certainly condemned to failure in

Lebanon.⁵⁹ Further, there is no evidence to suggest that the Israeli government had control over what was occurring on the battlefield or that it seriously considered the ramifications of attacking the Syrians and forcing the PLO to defend Beirut.⁶⁰ In effect, Israel's politicians and the IDF set Israel up for failure in Lebanon.

Begin and Sharon violated the most important lesson of Clausewitz in failing to establish the clear link between war and politics, and, in addition, a hidden agenda resulted in tactical and operational problems. An overarching strategy tying the military objectives into a coherent political goal was completely absent. As a result, Israel and Lebanon were condemned to suffer the consequences of a senseless policy without an object.⁶¹

Worse still, almost identical errors continued against Hezbollah until May 2000 when the IDF finally withdrew from Lebanon. In short, the political factors that were apparent by the end of 1985 and resulted in the withdrawal of Israel to the security zone were essentially the very same factors that resulted in Israel's final withdrawal from Lebanon. In both cases, Israel failed to achieve its objectives. From a political perspective, Israel's invasion of Lebanon and annexation of the security zone was virtually doomed to failure from the beginning. The only unknown element, therefore, was the timing of its withdrawal, which depended upon the resolution of its chief politician to admit Israel's failed political intervention in Lebanon

¹Von Clausewitz quoted in Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 60.

²Dan Bavly and Eliahu Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 233.

³Uri Savir, *The Process* (New York: Random House, 1998), 289.

⁴Dr. George W. Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 11-12.

⁵M. Thomas Davis, *40 Kilometers in to Lebanon* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1987), 2.

⁶Roger Trinquier, *A French View of Counterinsurgency* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), 6-7.

⁷Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 141.

⁸*Ibid.*, 141.

⁹ Davis, 68.

¹⁰Bavly Salpeter, 241.

¹¹Davis, 113.

¹²Yair Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 120-121.

¹³*Ibid.*, 121-122.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 122-123.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁶Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 68.

¹⁷Davis, 76.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 125.

²⁰Gabriel, 58.

²¹Evron, 132.

²²Gabriel, 130-131.

²³*Ibid.*, 65.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

- ²⁵Ibid., 64-65.
- ²⁶Evron, 126.
- ²⁷Ibid., 134.
- ²⁸Ibid., 138.
- ²⁹Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1984), 42.
- ³⁰Evron, 148.
- ³¹Ibid., 100.
- ³²Ibid., 152.
- ³³A. J. Abraham, *The Lebanon War* (Connecticut: Praeger, 1996), 162.
- ³⁴Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive* (New York: BBS Public Affairs, 1998), 298-299.
- ³⁵Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born With a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 213.
- ³⁶Ibid., 14-15.
- ³⁷Ibid., 15.
- ³⁸Ibid., 15-16.
- ³⁹Ibid., 19.
- ⁴⁰Van Creveld, 303-304.
- ⁴¹Israeli Foreign Ministry Information Division, <http://www.netaxs.com/~iris/hizbgph.htm>; Internet; accessed 30 August 2000.
- ⁴²Uri Savir, 289 (italics mine).
- ⁴³Ed Blanche, "Is the Myth Fading for the Israeli Army? - Part 1," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 1996, 550.
- ⁴⁴Hala Jaber, 26-27.
- ⁴⁵Human Rights Watch, *Report on Operation Accountability*, 3 [report on-line] <http://www.icg.org/hrw/reports/1996/Israel.htm>; Internet; accessed 1 January 2001.

- ⁴⁶Ibid., 4.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., 172.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., 171.
- ⁴⁹“Israel-Lebanon Cease-Fire Understanding,” available from www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00qj0; Internet; accessed 24 November 2000.
- ⁵⁰Bahman Baktiari and Augustus Richard Norton, “Insight-Lebanon End Game,” available from <http://www.mideastinsight.org/300/baktiarinorton.html>; Internet; accessed 4 August 2000.
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- ⁵⁴“The Time had come to End a Tragedy,” 5 June 2000 [magazine on-line] available from www.time.com/time/europe/magazine/2000/0605/barak; Internet; accessed 5 August 2000.
- ⁵⁵Ibid.
- ⁵⁶Doud Katab, “The Lebanon Lesson,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 25 May 2000, available from www.jpost.com/Editions/2000/05/25/Opinion/Opinion.7224; Internet; accessed 6 August 2000.
- ⁵⁷“Operation Peace for Galilee,” available from www.geocities.com/Pentagon/6453/pfg; Internet; accessed 4 October 2000.
- ⁵⁸Zvi Bar’el, *How the IDF Kept Itself in Lebanon*, available from www.angelfire.com/il/FourMothers/zvi10; Internet; accessed 6 August 2000.
- ⁵⁹Davis, 12.
- ⁶⁰Ibid., 115-116.
- ⁶¹Ibid., 119-120.

CHAPTER 3

MILITARY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAEL FROM LEBANON

The results obtained bear no relation to the resources and efforts expended. In fact, we are only dispersing, rather than destroying, the attacking bands. Our military machine reminds one of a pile driver attempting to crush a fly, indefatigably persisting in repeating its efforts. The inability of the army to adapt itself to changed circumstances has heavy consequences. It gives credence to the belief that our adversaries, who represent only weak forces, are invincible and that, sooner or later, we shall have to accept their conditions for peace.¹

Roger Trinquier

Precedent and Historical Dictums of Guerilla Warfare

Although first written in 1961 by a colonel in the French Army fighting in Indochina, the above lament perfectly describes the Israeli morass in Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak admitted as much to *Time Magazine* in an interview shortly after the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon when he stated regarding Hezbollah, “To fight against terrorism is like fighting mosquitoes. You can chase them one by one, but its not very cost effective. I did not see a single armed force that became stronger or a nation that became more self-confident by fighting guerillas in another country.”²

The aim of this chapter is to assess the success or otherwise of Hezbollah in employing guerilla tactics against Israel and the success or otherwise of the IDF in combating Hezbollah from 1982 until Israel’s withdrawal in May 2000. This will be undertaken through a combination of research and the personal experience of the author, who was a United Nations military observer in Lebanon from October 1997 until March 1998. The author was then placed in the position of Operations Officer, United Nations

Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) Observer Group Lebanon, during the period April to September 1998. The mission of UNTSO in Lebanon was to observe, investigate, and report incidents between the antagonists in the assigned area of operations. For ease of compilation, principles and activities will be addressed under individual headings and the strengths and failures of both antagonists will be assessed accordingly.

Guerilla warfare is not a new phenomenon and studies on it range back a considerable time. Nor is guerilla warfare a new experience to the Israelis, who themselves have practiced this art to varying degrees through groups like Bar Giora, Hashomer, Hagana, and Palmach since the very early 1900s. Primarily raised for the purpose of self-defense, these groups or their descendents increasingly adapted to offensive guerilla tactics, particularly against British troops in the 1940s. Notwithstanding their later reliance on conventional warfare to defeat Arab armies in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973, Israel also had the examples of the French in Indochina and Algeria and the US in Vietnam to guide them in their war with the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In his book, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory*, Dr. George Gawrych highlights the fact that in 1967, Israel relied on the three pillars of intelligence, the air force, and armored forces for victory. He also notes that in 1973, Israel prepared to fight the last war and employed forces that worked best in 1967 rather than develop a balanced force based on combined arms. Further, he states that the Israeli military leadership assumed that the Arabs would also fight the war in the same manner as before, rather than adopting new methods and tactics.³

History showed that the IDF's unwillingness to change in 1973 to be seriously flawed and almost fatal to Israel in the first four days of that War during which it was apparent that the IDF had prepared again for the 1967 War. At the very least, the political fallout from the 1973 war resulted in a change of government and severe recriminations against senior Israeli military leaders. It is surprising therefore that Israel repeated this error of failing to adopt new methods and tactics again in Lebanon in 1982 and beyond where it again prepared for the 1973 War. This time, however, Israel fought a guerilla force rather than a conventional army.

Guerilla Warfare

It is worth briefly detailing the immutable principles of guerilla warfare that have been practiced and proven over the centuries as viewed through the eyes of two recognized experts, France's Colonel Roger Trinquier and China's Mao Tse-tung. Roger Trinquier, author of *A French View of Counterinsurgency*, notes that guerillas fight within the framework of their organization, without personal interest and for a cause they consider noble.

The goal of the guerilla, during what can be a long period of time, is not so much to obtain local successes as it is to create a climate of insecurity, to compel the forces of order to retire into their most easily defensible areas. This results in the abandonment of certain portions of territory that the guerillas are then able to control. The support of the population is essential to the guerilla. In particular, it prevents him from being taken by surprise, a vital factor for success in combat. As long as this support is not withdrawn from him, we cannot surprise him, unless he commits some blunder, which is unlikely if he is well trained and battle-hardened. This is the reason why methods currently employed against guerillas--such as military outposts, autonomous commando groups or patrols detached from such posts, isolated ambushes, and wide ranging sweeps--only rarely achieve the hoped-for results, and then usually by accident.⁴

Trinquier highlights three points of interest. Firstly, that the guerilla force has time on its side and therefore is not restricted by the need to achieve a quick and decisive victory. Secondly, he notes that an aim of the guerilla is to force the enemy into easily defensible areas and military outposts; and finally, he points out the importance of the support of the local population to the guerilla. These three factors all proved decisive in the war in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah. With regard to the guerilla, Trinquier also writes that:

He chooses his own terrain, is well adapted to it and can move quickly and quite often disappear into it. He has the support of the population to which it is closely tied and gets information on all our movements from them and sometimes, (through agents infiltrated into our midst) on our intentions as well. What can the guerilla do with the means he has at his disposal? He chooses the terrain and imposes it upon us. It is usually inaccessible to heavy and quick-moving equipment, and thus deprives us of the benefit of our modern arms. We are forced to fight on foot, under conditions identical to those of the guerilla. On his terrain, which he knows perfectly, he is able to trap us easily in ambushes.⁵

Trinquier further expands on the intentions of guerilla forces by pointing out the reasons why the support of the local population is so important, namely, because they provide the guerilla with protection and information. In addition, the guerilla fights on ground of his choosing, terrain that limits the combat multiplier effect of modern weapon systems. These points too became critical in Israel's war with Hezbollah in south Lebanon. In addition to highlighting most of the above axioms, T. H. Lawrence also articulated other complimentary principles and philosophies regarding guerilla warfare.

We must impose the longest possible passive defense on the Turks (this being the most materially expensive form of war) by extending our own front to its maximum. Tactically we must develop a highly mobile, highly equipped type of Army, of the smallest size, and use it successively at distributed points of the Turkish line, to make the Turks reinforce their occupying posts beyond their economic minimum. Our cards were speed and time, not hitting power, and these gave us strategical rather than tactical strength. We were fortified in our freedom of movement by an intimate knowledge of the desert-front. Our tactics were also

tip and run, not pushes, but strokes. Our victory depended on our just use of speed, concealment and accuracy of fire. Irregular war is far more intellectual than a bayonet charge.⁶

In its simplest form, Mao Tse-tung noted that “When a guerilla force engages an enemy stronger than it, it retreats when the enemy advances, harasses when the enemy halts, attacks when the enemy tires, pursues when the enemy retreats.”⁷ These citations succinctly encapsulate the key precepts of guerilla warfare and could easily be added to by the writings of Clausewitz, Lenin, and Giap, to name just a few. These precepts should have been self-evident the IDF’s senior leadership that had itself participated in this form of warfare during the first half of the 1900s and had battled against the PLO, which had used the same tactics into the early 1980s.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah is essentially a Shiite Muslim movement consisting of several interconnected wings covering social, political, religious, and military portfolios. Despite its beginnings in the early 1980s as a militant Islamic guerilla movement embracing Iran’s revolutionary ideology, it has since developed into a pragmatic political and social organization aware that Lebanon is the most secular of Arab societies and uncomfortable with Islamic fundamentalism. Hezbollah won eight seats in Parliament as a result of contesting the 1992 Lebanese elections. This was largely a result of its social and military efforts in the south, as well as its willingness to accept that Lebanon would not embrace an imposed, strict code of Islamic behavior on its urbane society.

Hezbollah could only manage a limited impact on Lebanon’s affairs. It had nothing to offer the non-Shiite two-thirds of Lebanon’s population, and its impact within the Shiite community owed more to the regime’s scandalous neglect of the poor and Israeli bombardments than to the party’s own attractions. By the 1990s, Hezbollah was forced to the conclusion that it could not continue to defy

Lebanon's cosmopolitan reality, and that it should find itself a niche within the political system if it wished to avoid suffocating in a largely hostile environment. Party leaders denied any ambition to impose an Iranian-style Islamic state, a central component of Hezbollah's February 1985 program, sought dialogue with Christian religious personalities, and prepared for the prospect of having to coexist with Arab-Israeli peace arrangements.⁸

Hezbollah's early military efforts were disappointing to say the least. Timur Goksel, spokesman for the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL) since 1978 and with whom the author has conferred, recalled them as amateur and foolhardy though very brave. They simply walked into the line of fire only to be cut down immediately, in a similar fashion to the Iranian assaults against Iraq. A single attack against Israeli troops in mid-1986 resulted in twenty-four Hezbollah fatalities.⁹

After taking a short respite to reassess their situation during the late 1980s, Hezbollah emerged from a shadowy Islamic terrorist group that had mistrusted the media and alienated its supporters. It transformed itself into a socially committed, political and competent military entity that quickly earned the support of a multiconfessional community. The creation of a small number of "multiconfessional squads," known as Lebanese Resistance Brigades (LRB), within the military wing of Hezbollah was testimony to the diversity of support Hezbollah received. Although this is a little known fact, its importance should not be underestimated, particularly from the overall political perspective. By 1991, the metamorphosis appeared complete, particularly with regard to the performances of the Islamic Resistance, Hezbollah's military wing.

Timur Goksel attributes the improvement in the Islamic Resistance's performance to a change in the structure of command. Hezbollah gave the Islamic Resistance the status of an autonomous body, able to deal with the day-to-day attacks on Israeli targets without having to refer to the leadership in Beirut. This has allowed the Islamic resistance a free hand in making military decisions based on the circumstances in South Lebanon, which they are in a better position to judge than their leaders in Beirut.¹⁰

Most importantly, Hezbollah had learned from the mistakes of its early years and now better understood how to wage a guerilla war in terms of maximum effect on the enemy militarily, politically, and psychologically, whilst minimizing friendly casualties and guaranteeing popular local support. It is not altogether unlikely that Hezbollah's leadership understood Anwar Sadat's strategic thinking regarding war with Israel in 1973. Sadat's directive to his war minister and commander in chief was:

To challenge the Israeli security theory by carrying out a military action according to the capabilities of the armed forces aimed at inflicting the heaviest losses on the enemy and convincing him that continued occupation of our land exacts a price too high for him to pay, and that consequently his theory of security-based as it is on psychological, political and military intimidation-is not an impregnable shield of steel which could protect him today or in the future. . . .

In this directive, Sadat clearly directed the Egyptian Armed Forces to focus on achieving a psychological effect against Israel by hemorrhaging its nose-that is, by causing as many casualties as possible-rather than on seizing strategic terrain or destroying the IDF. Life was precious in Israel, hence an opportunity for Egyptian exploitation.¹¹

Hezbollah evidently understood that decisive victory on the battlefield is not of itself essential to the overall plan. Clearly Hezbollah was outnumbered and outgunned; however, it did hold significant advantages in terms of support of the populace and the effects of terrain on IDF weaponry and was able to exploit Israel's weaknesses. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to highlighting the Israeli and Hezbollah approaches to the various vagaries of the war in south Lebanon.

Topography

South Lebanon is a mountainous area rising steeply from sea level on the west coast to 9,000 feet at the peak of Mount Hermon, approximately 70 kilometers to the east. A long open valley known as the Bekaa Valley leads southwards from the far northeast of the country all the way to the south before turning into a steep wadi, and hooking sharply

to the west all the way to the coast, less than ten kilometers north of the Israeli border. This very narrow wadi, up to 2,000 feet deep in parts, was colloquially known as the “Hezbollah Highway” because it provided protection to Hezbollah guerillas moving down into south Lebanon to launch attacks in the security zone.

Rocks cover areas not enveloped in thick bramble and woods, and large boulders and caves provide significant camouflage and concealment, as well vital observation points, for small groups of guerilla fighters. The infrastructure is almost non-existent and dozens of small villages growing mainly tobacco and olives perch high on steep ridgelines. Roads are few and are narrow and winding and often unpaved, rendering them almost indistinguishable from the surrounding vegetation. In wet weather, these tracks become very boggy and often impassable to any traffic. On the coast, towns are densely populated and built up in the manner of small cities. In short, south Lebanon is almost perfect territory for conducting guerilla warfare. Martin Van Creveld states in relation to the 1982 invasion, “Much of the terrain occupied by the IDF was either built up or mountainous and densely wooded, dotted with villages perched up on the hills and winding tracks that led among them. From Galilee to Beirut it was more than sixty miles, hopelessly exposed to mines and ambushes with small arms and antitank rockets.”¹²

Having conducted Operation Litani in 1978, Israel would have been well aware of the effect that this sort of terrain would have on its weapons and tactics, particularly with regard to the limitations placed upon tanks and aircraft. This should have been even more noteworthy given that their enemy was a guerilla force and not a conventional army. Notwithstanding the effects of terrain on these major weapon platforms, the IDF continued, largely unsuccessfully, to use them until they were forced by sheer losses (in

the case of tanks that were now forced to remain stationary behind cover) to discontinue their effective use by late 1997.

Quite simply, the terrain negated the technological superiority and firepower of these weapons such that they were no longer combat power multipliers, but rather high payoff targets for Hezbollah. Given that, as was the case in 1967 and 1973, the IDF was most likely continuing to rely on the three pillars of intelligence, armor, and airpower, then two of their pillars were immediately severely limited in their overall effect simply by the nature of the terrain. As M. Thomas Davis notes, the war in Lebanon is fascinating as a case study in the modern use of force, if only because a conventional force fought against an opponent consisting primarily of irregulars or guerillas who fought when they chose to on familiar and favorable terrain.¹³ In addition, despite earlier recommendations to court the Shiites, intelligence also failed to foresee the emergence of Hezbollah.

Time

Time is the guerilla's friend; in fact, guerilla forces need time to wear down their opposition and to properly attack all elements--political, military, economic, and psychological--of their enemy's structure. Only by doing this can a force of inferior size, technology, and resources defeat a numerically and technologically superior army. In fact, time is required to train and prepare guerilla forces, to win the hearts of the populace and to learn more about the enemy's tactics and weaknesses. Speaking in approximately the early 1990s, several years after the emergence of Hezbollah, a Hezbollah cleric stated:

You see Hezbollah, on the military level, has taken massive steps forward from when it first started. When the invasion first took place we did not have the experts nor the experience that we do now. The resistance today can boast of having specialized regiments each with its own particular weaponry. We now have an infantry, an engineering division, an artillery force, a general staff, a signals body and the financial backing required to carry on. In other words, we have all the ingredients of a regular army. Of course this took a lot of time to arrive at and we benefited a lot from our experiences. The Resistance is on a different psychological level than it ever was before. A main factor which has played a vital role in our positive attitudes and performance is that we are strengthened by the people's support for us and their adoption of our cause.¹⁴

It was Sun Tzu who said that there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited¹⁵ and for Israel, time was critical. "Because of their country's small population and lack of military depth, the Israelis have adopted military strategies that emphasize the offensive and short, intense conflicts."¹⁶ Most importantly, the Israeli public expects quick decisive victories, something they were promised in 1982, when one of the plan's main principles was that the duration of the operation would not exceed 48 hours.¹⁷ Quoting Adans *On the Banks of the Suez*, Dr. Gawrych notes, "The dazzling victories in the '67 war . . . contributed to the building of a myth around the IDF and its personnel. The common expectations from the IDF were that any future war would be short with few casualties."¹⁸

Psychologically, when fighting a longer conventional war, adversaries can direct their entire nation's energies and resources towards defeating the enemy because usually national survival is a stake. When a conventional army engages a guerilla force, however, the conventional army, due normally to its overall superiority, is expected to win quickly and decisively, despite the tactical difficulties it faces. The public expects to be able to continue its daily lifestyle largely uninterrupted, expects the "credible" conventional army to deal effectively with the insurrection with the training and weapons

with which it has been furnished through taxes and is unwilling to expend extra resources. Any failure to win quickly and decisively affects the conventional army's credibility and the confidence of the taxpayer in the Army's ability to defend them, not to mention the psychological effect on the army itself regarding its inability to defeat the smaller guerilla force.

On the other hand, Lebanon had no such expectations. The civil war had been raging on and off since 1975, and the Lebanese Army was severely split in its loyalties and was never considered to be a factor in the invasion, as it had largely withdrawn into barracks. Additionally, the IDF were, in fact, welcomed by many Lebanese who hoped that only after defeating the PLO, would the IDF would withdraw from Lebanon. The life of the average Lebanese, particularly from Beirut southwards, was constantly interrupted, and an invasion would hardly be unusual.

Support of the Local Population

As quoted above, Roger Trinquier acknowledges the importance to both sides of winning popular local support. Hezbollah's success in gaining local support, not only through being prepared to fight the occupation but also through their social and political efforts, was also identified. The fact that the IDF had failed to win popular local support in Lebanon, particularly as a result of its policy of intentionally bombing innocent civilians, was highlighted in chapter 2. This tactic proved counterproductive and only added to the perception that Israel was an occupation force with territorial intentions.

Part of the reason possibly, can be found in what many regard as an attitude problem, often referred to in the media as aggressive posturing by the occupying force; some would call it hubris. It is impossible to stress this aspect strongly enough. Though caustic, it warrants examination because it stems partly from the fact that, until the early 1980s, the Israeli military had been in the ascendancy.

One foreign correspondent with much experience in the region said he felt the behavior of IDF forces in Lebanon has contributed to the public antipathy to the Israeli presence. He argued that IDF soldiers treated the region and its subjects with contempt. It could, of course, be a mindset, he felt. These were Arabs, so therefore they had to be suspect. But that, over the years, has been no excuse for treating them shabbily. The Israeli forces have not sought to win over the population. They have built new roads and posted road signs in Hebrew, commandeered facilities and established new bases, headquarters and detention centers. These measures were instrumental in transforming Shiite perceptions of the Israeli presence from liberator to occupier. What is clear is that instead of calming a region, the Israelis have inflamed it.¹⁹

Despite the historical imperative to win the hearts and minds of the local population, Israel appears to have ignored this dictum, as though technological and military superiority were of themselves sufficient and would, therefore, negate the need for the Shia support. Additionally, their understandably deep-seated distrust of all Arabs probably only reinforced this misperception that in the end proved critical. In the words of Israeli Captain Teddy Lapkin, who was assigned to commanding an army checkpoint in the Shouf mountains in 1984, “It was a guerilla war, and they won, there was no way we could win the hearts and minds of the population, so we were predestined to lose.”²⁰

Just Cause

An intangible but no less important facet in fighting an enemy is having a cause worth fighting for. This is very often accompanied by a freedom of action that is largely unencumbered by politics and/or international condemnation. Given that the guerilla force is normally given little legitimacy or recognition early on and that its objectives and consensus within the organization are often simple, there are few restraints placed upon it. It may indeed even require the employment of unusually barbaric acts, under the cover of the “just cause” to gain it the recognition it seeks. Although the West condemned Hezbollah in its early years, this changed significantly by the mid-1990s to

the point where Hezbollah was acknowledged and legitimized by the UN, the USA, and Israel. Certainly, it always enjoyed political support from all Arab countries, most importantly Lebanon, which realized that Hezbollah was the only force capable of defeating Israel.

In its simplest form, Hezbollah was a Lebanese guerilla army fighting a lone battle against a heavy-handed invader. This was neither a religious war nor a battle for economic gain. In the eyes of Hezbollah guerillas, it was simply the occupation of their homeland by a foreign entity.

The Shiites displayed a relentlessness, which the Israelis had never encountered from an Arab foe before: they weren't just ready to kill, they were ready to die; they didn't issue communiqués after each confrontation; they relished their successes in relative silence. South Lebanon became terrifying for Israeli soldiers, who grew to dread moving out of their base camps for fear that any object, rock, bush or tree might explode next to them.²¹

Ed Blanche, writing for *Jane's Intelligence Review* in 1997, noted regarding Hezbollah that it "strikes hard and often, is prepared to take casualties in its campaign to end the Israeli occupation of the border strip in a way that the Israelis and their allies are not." The same could not be said for the Israelis, who had little moral high ground in this dispute and even less after remaining in Lebanon after the initial invasion. Richard Gabriel summed up Israel's predicament in the conclusion to his book *Operation Peace for Galilee*:

One of the basic problems faced by any army of a democratic society is how to sustain the presence of a military force in an occupied country for any period of time when the security rationale for that presence is diminished. Paradoxically, in a condition of low-intensity conflict, where the occupying force is periodically attacked by enemy forces that are insufficient to bring about a military defeat, the problem increases, since it appears to the public and policy-makers of the occupying country that the gains are not worth the deaths and injuries incurred in keeping the force in place.²²

Gabriel's statement again reflected Sadat's intuition regarding Israel's dilemma in the 1973 war. Shmual L. Gordon summarized Israel's predicament when he wrote:

The Lebanon War was a major cause for significant change in the Israeli public's motivation for fighting against and defeating terror and guerilla movements outside the borders. In the past, the public was united around "just causes," in the belief that Arab terror represented pure evil, and that there was justification in every operation against terror. Like other fundamental beliefs, these have lost some of their vitality. The Lebanon War accelerated processes of division and uncertainty in Israeli society.²³

It is the author's conclusion that the protracted length of the Lebanon conflict; the lack of a just cause, such as state survival; and meddling in the affairs of a foreign nation combined to force Israel to conduct further self-examination. The result was an understanding that the occupation of Lebanon was serving no real purpose except to unnecessarily antagonize the Shia population of Lebanon for no Israeli gain.

Intelligence

Dr. Gawrych has already noted Israel's reliance on accurate and timely intelligence as one of the pillars ensuring its success in previous wars. In fact, Israel and its Western allies have often publicly heralded Israel's apparent superiority in this field as being almost omniscient and infallible. Evidence in south Lebanon, however, would suggest that this is not only a myth but that, in fact, Hezbollah was superior in mastering this fundamental of warfare, at least in this theater of war. This did not prevent Israel from scoring some intelligence victories, the most significant of which resulted in the killing of Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Abbas Musawi and his family in a car attacked by IDF helicopters. The lack of IDF intelligence, however, when compared with Hezbollah's mastery of it, did severely restrict Israel's options, a situation further exacerbated by the population's overwhelming support for Hezbollah.

The SLA proved to be a crucial “intelligence” liability for the IDF. Given that significant proportions of its soldiers are Shiites, as are an overwhelming proportion of the population in the south, Hezbollah has a large pool from which to gather intelligence, particularly on troop movements. Concerns regarding the IDF’s inability to gain information even reached the political level in 1997 when the IDF’s Chief of Staff, Amnon Shahak, told Knesset members the army was struggling to gather intelligence on Hezbollah activities and plans.²⁴

On the other hand, Hezbollah proved quite capable of gathering and exploiting intelligence. Specific targeting of senior IDF and SLA officers in recent years has proven the depth of Hezbollah’s infiltration of their forces. In 1997, General Levine, Northern Commander, and General Eli Amatay were attacked in separate incidents while traveling in south Lebanon, whilst on 28 February 1999 Senior Israeli Liaison officer Brigadier Erez Gerstein was killed by a roadside bomb.²⁵ Hezbollah’s kidnapping of the SLA’s security chief, Ahmed al-Hallaq, resulted in the total compromising of the IDF intelligence structure in Lebanon, which had taken years to build and exposed every agent.²⁶

Hezbollah’s intelligence, however, was not restricted to high-ranking individuals, as an ambush at the south Lebanese village of Ansariya showed. On 4 September 1997, Israel’s elite naval commando unit Flotilla 13 stumbled into a Hezbollah ambush that left twelve of the sixteen operatives dead. IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Amnon Shahak said that remote-controlled bombs first hit the commandos, suggesting that the guerillas had been lying in wait. Villagers reported that the guerillas had been in the ambush positions for at least two nights prior to the raid and that Israeli unmanned aerial

vehicles had flown over the area for several days prior to the raid.²⁷ Investigations suggesting intelligence leaks and infiltration led to accusations that

military intelligence, and perhaps the entire IDF, had in its assessment of Hezbollah as a combat entity grossly underestimated the combat capabilities of a highly determined, well-equipped and zealous foe. Israel's over-confidence and under-appreciation of its enemies almost led to a disaster in 1973, and IDF commanders have routinely underplayed the abilities, savviness and innovative qualities of the Arab soldier, especially with regard to terrorists.²⁸

Shmuel Gordon summed up an IDF assessment of Hezbollah's intelligence capabilities in his book, *The Vulture and the Snake*. "They have many informers and observers of their own among the civilian population of the security zone, who supply real-time data on potential moving targets such as patrols and convoys, and information for immediate operations or retreat. Their foremost intelligence achievement is that they learned the gathering capabilities of Israeli Intelligence and know how to deny us essential information in real-time."²⁹ Even UNTSO was privy to bombings thanks to local information prior to attacks. One such incident reported to the author at Headquarters OGL in mid-1998 allowed an observer team, under the author's direction, to position itself to observe a roadside bombing of a collaborator's vehicle by Hezbollah from only 300 meters away. What became very obvious to UNTSO staff was the fact that Hezbollah clearly had intimate knowledge and information on IDF and SLA movements, thereby ensuring permanent pressure on their patrols, resupply-convoys and troop changeovers.

Casualties

The key to victory in war is identifying and attacking the enemy's center of gravity. Given its relatively small population, the hub of Israel's power stems from its

few soldiers and their self-confidence. Knowing his own army's relative limitations, Anwar Sadat identified this element prior to the attack on Israel in 1973 and directed his army against this component of Israel's national psyche.

In this directive, Sadat clearly directed the Egyptian Armed Forces to focus on achieving a psychological effect against Israel by hemorrhaging its nose--that is, by causing as many casualties as possible--rather than on seizing strategic terrain or destroying the IDF. Life was precious in Israel, hence an opportunity for Egyptian exploitation.³⁰

After 1982, Israel lost a soldier killed every two to three weeks on average, approximately 20 soldiers per year (including those killed in the 1997 helicopter crash), not including the SLA. Such apparently unnecessary casualties over an eighteen-year period began to wear down Israel's will to continue the conflict. According to Shmuel L. Gordon, Hezbollah has again targeted this fundamental element of Israel's makeup. "The Hezbollah does not try to weaken the power of the IDF. Instead, it aims at what Israeli society is most sensitive to, the loss of human life."³¹

In contrast, he notes that "the main advantages enjoyed by the Hezbollah are its motivation and readiness to suffer casualties."³² UN Political Advisor Timur Goksel publicized this theme when he stated, "Hezbollah knows that they're not going to win the war on the battlefield, they're not taking on Israel's military might on the ground, they're taking the Israelis on psychologically." Israel's hypersensitivity about the steady rate of its casualties in south Lebanon has resulted in many Israelis' questioning the military value of continuing to occupy the security zone, particularly since the guerillas have rockets that can be fired over it into northern Galilee.³³

Nicholas Blanford, writing for *Jane's Intelligence Review*, also noted Hezbollah's tactic of attacking Israel's Achilles' heel. "Israel's sensitivity to casualties is the IDF's

greatest weakness and one that Hezbollah has successfully exploited. This sensitivity continues to hamper the IDF's effectiveness. When and if the IDF pulls out, this sensitivity may well be seen as the greatest factor.”³⁴ The IDF's effectiveness is hampered mostly in its movement away from an attacking attitude to a more defensive posture, exhibited largely by its unwillingness to risk patrols.

Casualty statistics are, for obvious reasons, often questionable, depending on the source. Where available throughout this chapter, UN statistics and figures will be used, given their objectivity and the requirement for secondary investigation. Where UN statistics are unavailable, the source of the information will be indicated.

During the three months of Operation Peace for Galilee, 368 Israelis were killed in action and 2,383 wounded in action. During the following year, the IDF suffered a further 148 killed in action and 340 wounded in action. This brought the total dead and wounded Israeli soldiers to 516 and almost 2,800, respectively. “Relative to the population of the United States, the number of Israeli dead and wounded is the equivalent of 32,460 dead and 163,380 wounded for the United States in a period of less than six weeks of combat and one year of occupation; that is, almost three-quarters of the dead suffered by the United States during the Vietnam conflict, which lasted ten years.”³⁵ In perspective, therefore, it is not hard to see then what effect this would have had on Israel at the time given its sensitivity to casualties. In the fifteen years from June 1985 until November 1999, the IDF suffered 244 killed in action (not including 73 IDF soldiers killed in an air crash over south Lebanon in February 1997) and 694 wounded in action, whilst the SLA had 410 killed in action (wounded in action unknown, guessed to be

several hundred).³⁶ Fatality figures for Hezbollah are much harder to gain; however, estimates from Israeli sources range from between 1,000 to 1,300.³⁷

What is certainly clear from these figures is that, including the 1982 invasion during Operation Peace for Galilee, Israel (including the SLA and the 73 IDF soldiers killed in the air crash) lost approximately 1,250 soldiers killed and approximately 4,000 injured. Whilst not all these were due to Hezbollah, a very significant proportion were. Even excluding Operation Peace for Galilee, IDF and SLA killed in action still number 875, whilst wounded in action number approximately 1,500; the vast majority due to Hezbollah.

The table 1 shows the increase in attacks by Hezbollah on IDF and SLA troops in south Lebanon over a nine-year period. The statistics are a combination of figures provided by the IDF from 1990 to 1995 and from Hezbollah from 1996 to 1998. The figures are similar to UN estimations. If nothing else, these figures suggest that the IDF's attempts to discourage Hezbollah attacks during Operation Accountability in 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996 were, at best, counterproductive. The IDF rarely initiate attacks against Hezbollah, but rather retaliate to each attack, therefore, IDF figures, with the exception of the two aforementioned operations, would be similar.

| Table 1. Hezbollah Attacks | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Year | Hezbollah Attacks on IDF/SLA |
| 1990 | 25* |
| 1991 | 52 |
| 1992 | 60* |
| 1993 | 158 |
| 1994 | 190* |
| 1995 | 345* |
| 1996 | 965 |
| 1997 | 889 |
| 1998 | 1519 |
| *Approximate | |

The table 2 details IDF, SLA, and Hezbollah casualties from 1996 to 1999. In the case of IDF and SLA casualties, these figures are taken from the Official IDF Internet site and have been compared with various Middle-East magazine articles. Comparison shows that discrepancies are usually within a 10 percent margin and normally only differ by one or two casualties. Hezbollah figures are taken from an unofficial Internet site but are comparable with unofficial UN figures. At least one Israeli source has Hezbollah killed-in-action figures as being lower than those shown in figure 2. It should be noted that approximately 15 percent of the Israeli Security Zone was out of bounds to UN troops and, therefore, UN figures are affected by the UN's inability to accurately observe, report and investigate all attacks in the area of operations. In effect, UN figures on attacks and casualties are likely to be numerically fewer than actually occurred. The figures in table 2 do not include the 73 IDF fatalities from the 1997 air-crash of two IDF helicopters but should, given that they were enroute to Lebanon for combat duty.

| Table 2. IDF, SLA, and Hezbollah Casualties | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Year | IDF Killed in Action | IDF Wounded in Action | SLA Killed in Action | SLA Wounded in Action | HEZBOLLAH Killed in Action |
| 1996 | 28 | 198 | 20 | 56 | 60 |
| 1997 | 39 | 93 | 25 | 71 | 56 |
| 1998 | 23 | 109 | 30 | 41 | 37 |
| 1999 | 13 | 53 | 22 | 70 | |

Although Hezbollah wounded-in-action figures are unavailable, they are traditionally fewer than those of the IDF or SLA, mainly because they attack in small numbers and, due to their limited support and protection, casualties are more often fatalities. Interestingly, combined IDF and SLA killed-in-action figures exceeded Hezbollah killed-in-action figures in 1997 and 1998. Further, Hezbollah killed-in-action figures drop consecutively from 1996 to 1998. This can likely be attributed to a change in policy by the IDF, wherein force protection became a significant issue within the IDF and tactics became increasingly defensive rather than offensive, particularly given the increasing talk of an inevitable Israeli withdrawal.

The IDF has intensified its use of artillery while dramatically cutting back on infantry and special-forces operations on the ground. Some in Israel say the IDF has become an “army in retreat.” Israeli newspapers have reported that IDF personnel in the occupation zone spend most of their time inside heavily fortified outposts, with little, if any, patrolling or ambush operations by elite commando units.³⁸

The result of this policy has appeared starkly in killed-in-action ratio figures. This stood at 1:5.2 in the IDF’s favor in 1990, became 1:2 in 1991 and was down to 1:1.7 in 1992.³⁹ As the table 2 indicates, the figures for 1997 and 1998 show that the more recent killed-in-action ratio favors the Hezbollah, a situation wholly unacceptable to the IDF and the Israeli public.

An interesting aside to the above figures are the statistics quoted on the US Government MOUT Homepage on “Lessons Learned” regarding Israeli battle shock casualties resulting from Israel’s invasion during Operation Peace for Galilee. It states that

10-24% of Israeli soldiers serving in Lebanon experienced psychological problems as a result of their battle experience. This compared with a psychological casualty rate of only 3.5% to 5% in the 1973 war means that battle shock casualties suffered in Lebanon were two to five times more serious. The number of soldiers able to return to their units after treatment was also much lower than should have been expected.⁴⁰

There is little definitive evidence to prove the exact cause of this high rate of psychological problems, although speculation surrounds the stress caused by urban warfare, the lack of a “just cause” for fighting in Lebanon and the length of time spent in south Lebanon. The corollary to this will be studied more closely in the next chapter; however, there has been a definite social impact on the willingness of young Israelis to serve in Lebanon, particularly in the combat arms.

Weaponry, Tactics, and Strategy

In the past, guerilla armies have had to rely on the most rudimentary weapons to attack their enemies. Today’s guerilla armies have much better access to advanced weapons and in significant quantities. This is particularly the case with Hezbollah, whom Iran has been supplying with the latest equipment. Such is the firepower utilized by Hezbollah that a quick roll call of its arsenal suggests that it has more firepower than many small conventional armies.

Guerilla squads on operations inside the occupation zone can be armed with M16 or AK-47 assault rifles, Bangalore torpedoes, hand grenades, AT-3 Sagger and AT-4 Spigot anti-tank missiles and rocket propelled grenades. The fire-support teams are equipped with 81mm and 120mm mortars, 106mm recoilless rifles and

short and long range katyusha rockets. Hezbollah has also obtained at least two Soviet-made towed 122mm guns as well. To counter the IDF's AH-64 Apache helicopter gunships and F16 aircraft, the Islamic Resistances' (IR) air defense units are armed with SA-7 surface-to-air missiles and ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns mounted on flatbed trucks. IR fighters have also been known to fire the ZU-23s horizontally at posts manned by IDF and SLA soldiers.⁴¹

The above arsenal has also been augmented with BM-21 rocket launchers.⁴²

Although the use of these weapons has not always been effective, the potential alone has had a disquieting effect. Whilst the AK-47 and the mortar are the daily weapons of choice for Hezbollah, three weapons in particular have had considerably more actual and psychological effect on the IDF, SLA, and the Israeli public. These weapons are the roadside bomb (RSB), the katyusha rocket and the American-made TOW antitank missile.

The apparently ubiquitous RSB is clearly the weapon most feared by IDF and SLA soldiers as they patrol south Lebanon on a daily basis, and statistics testify to its effectiveness. In 1998, sixty RSBs were detonated in south Lebanon killing sixteen and wounding more than fifty IDF and SLA soldiers.⁴³ This represents almost 30 percent of the IDF and SLA fatalities that year; however, it is not the number of deaths but the psychological effects behind the weapon that is most effective.

Soldiers often expect or can, to an extent, anticipate an attack by certain weapon types, depending upon the terrain they are in. In addition, they feel they have a chance against a human foe, who is equally prone to fear and error. Having to patrol an area in which any one of the thousands of similar looking rocks could, in fact, be a bomb has a significant psychological impact. In the first nine months of 1999, twenty-three IDF and SLA soldiers were killed in south Lebanon, but a staggering sixteen (almost 75 percent) died as a result of roadside bombs (RSBs).⁴⁴

The deadliest weapon employed by the IR, however, is the roadside bomb, planted along routes used by IDF troops and members of the SLA. The bombs have grown increasingly sophisticated in recent years. Originally, they were simple, homemade Claymore-style directional mines consisting of explosive packed with ball bearings. The bombs were triggered either by tripwires or by anti-personnel mines attached to the charges by cortex. The IR then developed shaped-charge bombs with rocket-type trajectories, while the latest development has been the use of photocell technology to detonate the bombs.⁴⁵

Another tactic is to place the bombs inside fake Bakelite (fiberglass) garden rocks that are indistinguishable from the surrounding countryside. This tactic has been so successful that the Israelis copied the idea.

Sometimes, several “rocks” are linked together with cortex and attached to anti-personnel mines. Last month, an Israeli bomber, putting together his camouflaged explosives in a workshop, accidentally left a Hebrew ordnance tag inside the “rock.” On another, one UN unit found “six ballbearings” written in Arabic underneath. But it is the Hezbollah who is winning the war.⁴⁶

RSBs may be used as stand-alone bombs triggered by a soldier against a target from several hundreds of meters away using a mobile phone or be accompanied by an ambush either by a Hezbollah squad or mortars. Even more insidious is the tactic of planting two RSBs close together, one to take out the primary target and the second to be detonated when soldiers running for cover run into a secondary kill zone or when an IDF rescue party arrives to provide assistance. Although IDF convoys utilize vehicles specially configured for electronic warfare to jam Hezbollah detonation frequencies, Hezbollah manages to overcome these methods with increasingly innovative techniques of its own.

As a UN observer, the author routinely watched regular early-morning SLA mine-clearance patrols of resupply routes, wherein a squad of soldiers would clear stretches of road by foot. With soldiers supported by an M113 APC separated by tens of yards to minimize casualties, these patrols would literally walk roads between villages, often

counting the number of rocks with the intention of discovering “extra rocks.” The APC would travel at some distance behind because the theory was that it was better to lose a soldier than an entire APC. Subsequent investigations of such attacks were routine for UN observers. Of even greater concern for the IDF and SLA has been the fact that on occasion, Hezbollah has been able to plant RSBs directly outside fortifications or within yards of the front gates and attack patrols just as they are leaving their bases. The author investigated a number of such incidents and never ceased to be amazed at just how close the guerillas had been without being discovered.

One such incident in which the author was involved, an investigation near the village of Beit Yahun early in 1998 as part of a UN team, resulted in the death of a SLA soldier from a RSB planted approximately fifteen meters from the front gate. Notably, the gate faced south of the position when any attack would normally be expected from the north. Not only had Hezbollah planted the RSB very close to the position, but also they had moved around to the rear of the position without having been seen. The first soldier was killed instantly before the second soldier even passed the gate, thus putting an immediate end to the patrol.

Another very effective weapon employed by Hezbollah is the katyusha rocket. The RSB was primarily used against IDF and SLA troops and vehicles; however, the katyusha’s effect was aimed at the Israeli public.

While the roadside bomb is Hezbollah’s most effective military weapon, politically the antiquated katyusha rocket has become its most important weapon. The Soviet 122mm rocket, a notoriously inaccurate Second World War weapon with a 22 kilometers range, has long been the principal artillery weapon of Hezbollah and still proves its worth today. Hezbollah is rumored to also have acquired the 240mm rockets with a range of 40 kilometers. This would bring the industrial suburbs of Haifa within range. Although Hezbollah refuses to confirm

whether it has such weapons, the IDF is unwilling to take chances. During the last two katyusha crises, Israeli civil defense units were put on alert all the way to Haifa, apparently in anticipation of 240mm rockets being fired. Although the katyusha is designed to be launched in mass volleys at infantry formations, Hezbollah rarely fires more than 60 rockets from different locations in a single assault. The targets are generally the Israeli towns of Kiryat Shemona in Upper Galilee and Nahariya on the coast of Western Galilee. Before the creation of the April Understanding, katyusha attacks on northern Israel were routine but since April 1996, there have only been a handful of cross-border katyusha attacks. All those claimed by Hezbollah were in direct response to Lebanese civilian casualties.⁴⁷

The effect of calling almost one-million inhabitants of the Galilee into bomb shelters even twice a year has an enormous impact on Israel's public confidence and in their faith in the politicians and IDF's ability to protect them. This is notwithstanding the fact that only thirty-four Israeli civilians were killed in katyusha attacks between 1968 and 1996, an average of a little over one person per year. The fallacy of the "security zone" becomes even starker, given that it is common knowledge that the 10-kilometers zone is only one-half the distance of the 122-millimeter katyusha's range.⁴⁸

On 25 August 1998, while the author was UNTSO OGL's S3, an Israeli artillery attack killed one Lebanese civilian and injured six. Hezbollah responded by firing 90 katyusha rockets into Israel, injuring twelve Israeli civilians. In previous years, Israel would have immediately retaliated; however, the resulting Israeli deliberations and failure to avenge themselves suggested that psychologically, Hezbollah had the last word and the antiquated katyusha had become a strategic weapon in Hezbollah's hands.

The Israeli government realized that any retaliation had to directly target Hezbollah without causing casualties to Lebanese civilians or damage to Lebanon's infrastructure as any breach of the April Understanding would provoke more such katyusha attacks into Galilee. However, the perpetual problem facing the IDF is that Hezbollah targets cannot be found. They were looking for guerilla targets. They found none to hit and there was nothing they could do.⁴⁹

The American designed TOW antitank missile is the third of the trinity of extremely effective Hezbollah weapons. The loss of three Merkava and one Magach main battle tank to Hezbollah-fired TOW missiles in September and October of 1997 proved to be a critical blow to IDF credibility and confidence. Whereas IDF tanks were previously able to move with virtual impunity, the IDF withdrew all but their armor-draped tanks.⁵⁰

Israel's main battle tanks within the security zone were deployed in protected static positions to defend the line of hilltop forts in the south.⁵¹ This resulted in a significant psychological victory for Hezbollah and further reinforced the bunker mentality of the IDF and SLA forces, whose military prestige and morale suffered yet another blow. Of further concern for the IDF was that now this second pillar of their perceived "key to military success" had been removed as an effective offensive weapon in Lebanon. Armored forces, the weapon with which the IDF were most competent and comfortable in previous wars, became little more than a target of opportunity for Hezbollah forces. Except for the use of their night vision devices, armor proved of little use against small mobile squads in the mountainous terrain of south Lebanon.

It was a somewhat ignominious twist that the destruction of the IDF tanks was caused by what was previously only rumored to be US-made TOW missiles originally provided to Israel. Nicholas Blanford, writing for the *Daily Star* in November 1997, wrote of the discovery that "members of the Observer Group Lebanon (OGL), a military force assisting UNIFIL in the occupation zone, have found traces of the thin, wire filament used on TOWs to guide them to their targets."⁵² The author has observed the

wire found as part of an Observer Group Lebanon (OGL) Team investigation and can also confirm the find.

As part of an OGL team, the author also carried out a restricted investigation (understandably restricted by the IDF, who would not let the UN visit the scene until forty-eight hours after the attack) on the destruction of one of the tanks near the village of At-Tiri in October 1997. The turret was separated from the hull, and the tank totally burned out. Ironically, the TOWs had been delivered to Hezbollah by Iran, which had received them from Israel as a result of the Iran Contra Affair and the “arms for hostages deal” arranged by Robert McFarlane.⁵³

The third pillar of Israeli success in previous wars, and one on which Israel was again relying, had been the air force. Unfortunately, this too was to prove relatively ineffective in terms of destroying three or four-man guerilla squads, which had long dispersed before the air force had arrived. Moreover, even though there were no IDF helicopters lost to Hezbollah fire, the AH-64 Apaches were susceptible to antiaircraft fire and SAM attacks if they flew too close. This lesson should have been all too obvious to the IDF in the early days of Operation Peace for Galilee. Martin Van Creveld noted even then that “the IAF’s [Israeli Air Force] ability to influence operations on the ground was limited. In the west and center, its bombing and strafing sorties were fundamentally irrelevant owing to the nature of the terrain and the nature of the enemy.”⁵⁴

Given that the nature of the terrain and the enemy never changed over the next eighteen years and that Hezbollah’s ability to strike back with modern weaponry had improved significantly, this pillar of the IDF’s plan too was rendered largely ineffective. This ineffectiveness was confirmed again in 1996 during Operation Grapes of Wrath,

during which Hezbollah's katyushas and crews proved to be a difficult target for F-16s and Cobra helicopter gunships. Not one katyusha launcher was destroyed. Numerous military experts later stated that the Israeli airstrikes were doomed to be ineffective against such small targets.⁵⁵ A discussion between the author and an IFD Officer on 18 February 2001 confirmed the difficulties of killing Hezbollah katyusha crews, particularly since many of their katyushas were automatically armed after being set on timers ensuring that crews were often nowhere near the rockets when they were fired.

Tactics

Part of Hezbollah's strength is derived from the fact that its squads are based on largely autonomous groups of not more than three or four members without a central command structure, making it almost impossible to infiltrate. Comprising a hard-core cadre of only 500 to 600 men, they have significantly changed their operations from the sprawling guerilla movement of the 1980s.

The combat units now move into the operational area to carry out specific attacks rather than live in the southern villages that are prey to Israeli raids and intelligence scrutiny. There has been a vast improvement in their staff work, organization, planning and intelligence-gathering. Their reconnaissance work these days is meticulous. Their security's virtually airtight now. They have no real identifiable bases. They never surrender the element of surprise, which is the essence of this kind of warfare. The Israelis send out ambush teams on potential infiltration routes but we've yet to see any sign that the Israelis have known for sure that they were coming. Hezbollah don't use radios and don't signal their intentions.⁵⁶

A characteristic Hezbollah attack consists of a hit-and-run assault on an IDF or SLA position or patrol. It will normally involve two squads, each comprising three-to-four men. Typically, the first squad will attack a compound at any time of day at close range with light and heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and Sagger or

Spigot antitank missiles. At the same time, the second squad, acting as a fire support team, will fire 81-millimeter or 120-millimeter mortars. The attack will last not more than a couple of minutes before the guerillas exfiltrate before or during IDF and SLA artillery, mortar, or helicopter gunship retaliatory fire.

On average, Hezbollah launched about four attacks per day at varying times, using no distinguishable patterns regarding where attacks occur to maintain pressure. These attacks are relatively easy to coordinate, particularly for experienced fighters. “In a close-in clash, the IDF, although better armed and in most cases better trained (at least for conventional warfare), can only use a small part of their sophisticated arsenal. The traditionally superior professional skill and overwhelming effect of firepower and mobility, which have contributed to previous IDF victories, are less important in Lebanon.”⁵⁷

Hezbollah, however, were not limited simply to attacks on singular positions but have also displayed a capability to synchronize concurrent attacks against multiple positions spread across a wide geographical area. In February of 1997 it launched twenty-one attacks on IDF and SLA positions simultaneously. In late December of 1997, Hezbollah repeated this scenario, but this time launched twenty-five attacks on IDF and SLA positions simultaneously. On 2 July 1998, the author recorded the following event in his operations log. At 0525 hours, Hezbollah launched a coordinated attack on eighteen separate IDF and SLA positions simultaneously using approximately 125 guerillas. During this attack they overran SLA position W134, Haddatha village, and raised a Hezbollah flag on its ramparts after clearing a minefield. A consolidation of UN reports noted that Hezbollah fired at least 162 rounds of mortar, 33 rounds of 106-

millimeter recoilless rifle, 83 sagger/RPG rounds, and thousands of rounds of light and heavy machine gun. IDF responded with 177 rounds of 155-millimeter artillery, heli Rockets, and approximately 9,000 rounds of light and heavy machine gun fire. One Hezbollah guerilla was killed; three IDF and one SLA soldiers were wounded. The attack was filmed by Hezbollah and shown on international television.

An attack of this magnitude clearly demonstrates considerable coordination and planning and remarkable secrecy, given the number of fighters involved, and is testimony to training and discipline. Most importantly from a military perspective, Hezbollah almost always had the initiative. In his concluding remarks on Hezbollah, Shmuel L Gordon writes:

Hezbollah has become a remarkably skilled guerilla movement, pursuing political, social, military and propaganda goals. Its development reveals a deep understanding of the theory and practice of guerilla warfare. Central control of the different wings of the organization is a power multiplier that enhances the movement's integrity and unity. In the last few years Hezbollah fighters have acquired the knowledge and proficiency needed to exploit modern weapon systems such as anti-tank missiles, sophisticated mines, proximity and electronic fuses, communication, and intelligence gathering systems. The integration of guerilla doctrine and tactics with modern systems has become a substantial factor in the movement's success against a modern, well-trained, well-equipped IDF.⁵⁸

Time has shown that Israel made three major operational errors in the war in south Lebanon: the establishment of the SLA, the establishment of outposts or firebases, and incorrect structure and training. The establishment of the SLA was the first critical operational error. Reliance by Israel on what amounted to be little more than a mercenary force with no motivation other than coercion and money to sustain it was always a false premise, particularly against such a highly motivated force, such as Hezbollah, and especially over a long period of time.

Not only did the SLA fail to believe in a just cause, they were being forced to fight fellow Lebanese. In addition, the shortage of Christian Lebanese meant that the IDF were forced to recruit Shiite Muslims, who eventually outnumbered the Christians by the mid-1990s. This inevitably led to significant intelligence leaks within the SLA and a growing mistrust between them and the IDF. Frequent defections by SLA soldiers to Hezbollah (twenty-four confirmed in 1997 alone) further added to the mistrust resulting in IDF troops refusing to mount joint patrols with the SLA.⁵⁹

As David Rudge wryly noted in the 26 of May 2000 edition of the *Jerusalem Post* newspaper, “The total disintegration of the SLA as the IDF withdrawal began is the most conclusive possible proof of the fragile nature of the conceptual policy known as the security zone. If residents of Galilee communities had known that the buffer region that gave them a sense of security really was gossamer thin, they would not have slept properly for the past 15 years.”⁶⁰ The wishful thinking that the IDF could fight terror and guerilla by proxy evaporated.⁶¹

In 1998, the IDF manned thirty-two positions, and the SLA manned sixty-two positions in south Lebanon. In June of 1999, the SLA abandoned fifteen (25 percent) of its outposts in south Lebanon because of repeated heavy attacks by Hezbollah, resulting in considerable casualties. This signaled the beginning of the end for the SLA as a fighting force of any substance. In addition, it affected the strength of the overall cordon of outposts designed by Israel, thereby affecting its offensive potential against Hezbollah and reinforcing a defensive mentality within the IDF and SLA.

An earlier citation from Roger Trinquier noted the weakness of establishing a chain of outposts. He goes on to write:

Military outposts, installed at great expense in areas to be pacified, are in general not successful. Often the villages they surround are as well controlled by our enemies as villages quite distant. They cause the guerillas no trouble because there is no need to take them. Armed bands can freely circulate in the large areas between the outposts, and can organize and control the population without interference. In addition, the disposition of the outposts is an open book to our enemies, who observe them at their leisure. They miss nothing. The only usefulness of the outposts is the obligation they create for us. To maintain them forces us to open and keep up roads, to protect supply convoys during the course of long hauls, and in general to carry on military activity in which we would not indulge if it were not for the outposts.⁶²

Israel may have done well to have considered Trinquier's views, penned twenty years earlier through bitter experience. Further, this IDF policy gave away the critical element of surprise and instead developed a bunker mentality. In examining the IDF's tactics, David Eshel, an Israeli, states that a chain of fortified positions is an ill-fated solution and has proven so in most anti-guerilla wars. Firebases only draw enemy fire and usually result in the adoption of passive operations.⁶³ In the end, the IDF and SLA simply became stationary targets for Hezbollah attacks.

The third and final key operational error committed by the IDF was its inability to quickly, effectively, and psychologically adapt from fighting conventional warfare to guerilla warfare and to adjust its training and force structure. Writing in regard to 1983, Martin Van Creveld wrote;

There was no way to cope with the increasing guerilla attacks along the lines of communications. Like late-twentieth-century armies elsewhere, the IDF floundered, vainly trying to sort out combatants from noncombatants and hitting thin air when it tried to bring tormentors to heel. Like late-twentieth-century armies elsewhere, too, the heavy-handed punitive operations it sometimes mounted left a legacy of hatred and, if anything, played into the opposition's hands. As Ben Gal wrote in retrospect, of all the Israeli wars, the one in Lebanon was probably the best prepared, down to the most minute detail. Every tank was ready to start and every inch of the terrain had been reconnoitered many times, however, of all the Israeli wars, it was based on the most profound misunderstanding of what the IDF could and could not achieve.⁶⁴

Shmuel Gordon confirms Van Creveld's observations when writing in 1998:

IDF army units in Lebanon are far less proficient in guerilla warfare than are the Hezbollah. This weakness stems from the fact that Israel's armed forces are trained largely for high intensity conflict. Consequently, the training of soldiers and units for counter-guerilla warfare is marginal. Thus, Hezbollah fighters are much more familiar than IDF soldiers with the terrain, population, and other unique conditions and circumstances of southern Lebanon.⁶⁵

Although little has been published about them, Israel did create "Egoz" counter-guerilla units specially trained to oppose Hezbollah's tactics during the mid-1990s, however, this was at best, too little, too late, and met with only mixed success, as shown by the failure at Ansariya in 1997. Basic IDF errors, such as using the same resupply routes, methods, and timetables for months on end, contributed to IDF and SLA casualties. These routines were easy for the author and other UN observers, as well as Lebanese civilians, to track. Presumably, it was just as simple for Hezbollah to track as well.

Hezbollah became so adept at guerilla warfare that it had often long departed before any effective retaliation could be launched. Commonly, the IDF and SLA ceased to aim at suspected firing points during attacks, preferring instead to fire at potential exfiltration routes in the hope of catching the guerillas as they withdrew. Hezbollah was not only engaging IDF patrols face to face when challenged, it actually sought out IDF and SLA patrols to attack. Inevitably, it was most often Hezbollah who held the initiative and the momentum whilst the IDF was left only to react.

Media and Propaganda

Although it is impossible to quantify, another area in which Hezbollah appears to have experienced considerable success was its use of the media. Hezbollah has its own

newspaper, *Al-Ahed* (The Pledge), its own radio station, *Al-Nour* (The Light), and its own television station, *Al-Manar* (The Beacon), all of which it has used with considerable impact within Lebanon. Whenever Hezbollah launches raids and attacks, it inevitably videotapes them. The videos were then shown almost immediately by Al-Manar, which is broadcast throughout Lebanon, a practice begun in the mid-1990s.

The most spectacular attacks are televised internationally. These broadcasts have served to prove the effectiveness of Hezbollah and substantiate its claims. They have had a remarkable impact on the SLA in terms of defections, as well as on the Israeli public. If seeing IDF patrols being blown up was not bad enough, television footage of a Hezbollah guerilla climbing into a heavily fortified IDF position unnoticed during the day and engaging in a fist fight with an IDF soldier before withdrawing unharmed shamed and angered the Israeli population in August 1998.

Certainly, television footage of Hezbollah attacks on SLA positions in which the soldiers are seen running for cover whilst guerillas raise the Hezbollah flag on the ramparts, as occurred on 2 July 1998, also did little for SLA morale. If this were not enough, Hezbollah also maintains three Internet web sites, www.moqawama.org, www.hezbollah.org and www.almanar.com. The Al-Manar site became the author's first "port-of-call" of a morning prior to daily briefings. It detailed Hezbollah's attacks from the previous night and allowed the author as S3 to compare the details with reports by UN teams. Any discrepancies (of which there were very few) resulted in team taskings for the following day for further investigation and confirmation.

Retired Israeli Colonel Shmuel Gordon has publicly acknowledged the contrast in media and propaganda success between Hezbollah and IDF.

A substantial element of Hezbollah strategy is influencing a variety of public opinions. Its activities aim at shaping public opinion among Israeli civilians, government officials and branches, and IDF officers. The Hezbollah tries to shake the confidence of these groups in the IDF's capabilities and in the wisdom of having a security zone in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah leaders try to undermine the cooperation of the SLA and southern Lebanon population with Israel by pointing out that it will not stay there forever and will retreat eventually. Media warfare is a vital element of guerilla strategy. The media has always been a valuable instrument. Frequently, TV reports on a guerilla operation have more effect than the operation itself. Therefore, the contest between a guerilla movement and its rival over manipulating the media is highly intense. Since the international media tends to favor guerilla movements, this contest is difficult to win. Israeli governmental offices have not yet succeeded in the war over international public opinion.⁶⁶

This has been a significant problem for Israel, which has traditionally benefited from pro-Western public support in the media. This situation balanced out somewhat during the latter years in Lebanon, when Israel was portrayed more as an invading force rather than a defender of territory and as the West lost interest in the protracted war in Lebanon.

Morale

If morale is a combat indicator, then the IDF apparently had some very real problems resulting from its time in Lebanon.

There has been a lot of talk in recent years concerning the deterioration of the IDF as a fighting force. For years, IDF officials had been concerned over the decreasing number of conscripts volunteering into front-line combat units, an increasing number of training accidents resulting in fatalities and an overall decline in morale. Many have attributed the latter to the Israeli youth, who saw peace within reach and then crumble before their eyes, as well as the assassination of their prime minister, and who are eager to taste the good life and luxuries of Israeli society rather than the harsh and self-sacrificing reality of military service.⁶⁷

Al Venter, writing for *Jane's Intelligence Review* six months later, confirmed this problem.

Israel is in a dilemma about the future of its forces in south Lebanon. IDF troops regard a posting there as particularly hazardous, even though casualties are minimal when compared to the numbers of combatants deployed. The extent of this unease was demonstrated last December (1997) when 60 soldiers from the crack Golani Brigade mutinied after being told that they were being deployed across the border.⁶⁸

This, however, is not simply a recent phenomenon.

The issue of dwindling military morale was brought into sharp focus on 29 October 1994 when a four-man squad of the Givati Brigade, one of the IDF's prime infantry formations, abandoned its outpost at Tel Dabshah in the Israeli occupied zone in south Lebanon during a daylight attack by Hezbollah guerillas. They did so without firing a shot and did not, as doctrine dictates, pursue the enemy. After pounding the post with heavy mortar and machine gun fire, the guerillas attacked and penetrated the outer ramparts. One planted a Hezbollah flag above the post before withdrawing. Another filmed the scene with a video camera, which was later seen on Israeli television. The front-page headline in *Ma'ariv* the next day was blunt and uncompromising, "In one word, Cowardice." In December 1995, 32 Israeli paratroopers abandoned their fortified outpost on the Lebanese border because they did not trust the young commanding officer. That unprecedented action by a company of one of the Israeli army's elite units sent shock waves through the military establishment. It also raised questions about the state of affairs in what is arguably the Middle East's finest armed forces at a critical juncture in the region, when Israeli society itself is undergoing profound change. Without a doubt, there has also been a change in Israeli society's perception of the army and of military service. Among disturbing trends is a 50% increase in the number of soldiers seeking psychological help. Israel's comptroller, Miriam Ben Porath, said in her annual report in May 1996 that the vaunted IDF is suffering a serious drop in morale and motivation. There is a feeling of social legitimacy given to the phenomenon of getting out of reserve duty she said.⁶⁹

Whilst these instances are clearly not indicative of an overall malaise within the IDF, they still highlight obvious concerns that are being addressed publicly and at the highest levels of Israeli society, which appear to stem from the length of time the IDF has remained in Lebanon and its apparent inability to achieve victory. The social effects of the war in Lebanon on Israeli society will be looked at in greater depth in the next chapter.

Israel's First Military Defeat

There are clearly benefits to Israel as a result of its withdrawal from Lebanon, namely, that it diminishes Hezbollah's ostensible purpose which was the removal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory, as well as weakening the geopolitical leverage previously held by Syria and Iran. It is difficult, however, to arrive at any other conclusion than the fact that Israel was defeated by Hezbollah in Lebanon, *forcing its withdrawal* on 24 May 2000.

"Day of Humiliation" read the headline in Israel's mass-circulation newspaper, describing the withdrawal from Lebanon on 25 May 2000. "One of the world's smallest guerilla forces had driven one of the world's most powerful armies out of an entire country" noted long time Middle East journalist Robert Fisk.⁷⁰ The *Sydney Morning Herald's* correspondent in Beirut noted on 1 July 2000 that "relentless guerilla attacks convinced the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, to pull his troops out of Lebanon." In the *Jerusalem Post's* 25 May 2000 edition, Daoud Kuttub laments, "How can we convince people that non-violent resistance works, when we see that armed resistance produces results while negotiations fail?"

Although some may attempt to portray otherwise, in concert with political and social factors, the author believes that it was a military defeat forced upon Israel by sustained Hezbollah attacks over a protracted period, resulting in unnecessary and finally unacceptable casualties, that culminated in Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. If this were not the case, it is hard to imagine what other reasonable explanation would adequately justify the cause of Israel's withdrawal. Clearly the military contribution of Hezbollah cannot be underestimated in terms of its effect on Israel's decision to withdraw

and that it may have driven the political and social imperatives to return the IDF to within Israel's borders.

Conclusion

The above facts highlight the difficulties the IDF as a conventional army has faced in fighting a guerilla force, Hezbollah. Although not an entire stranger to the requirements of guerilla warfare, the IDF has essentially developed into a conventional army which between 1956 and 1973 relied almost entirely on the three pillars of intelligence, armor and airpower to defeat its enemies. Notwithstanding that it had received warning of improved Arab fighting ability in 1973, the tendency of the IDF to dismiss Arab military capabilities and rely on old methodology and structures remained in 1982.

In essence, the additional failure to adapt to a guerilla enemy, preferring instead to rely on conventional tactics, resulted ultimately in defeat for Israel in May 2000, when it was forced to withdraw from Lebanon. Hezbollah, despite poor military beginnings, worked within its limitations to wear down the IDF politically, socially, and militarily, using terrain and sophisticated weaponry to negate the technological superiority of a clearly superior enemy. Time proved an ally of the guerillas and a curse to the IDF, with the former having the support of the local population and a just cause as their motivation.

The three pillars of Israel's previous military successes had indeed become the "Albatross of Decisive Victory." The almost total breakdown of the Israeli intelligence apparatus in Lebanon, coupled with aggressive infiltration of the SLA, turned this element into a decisive combat multiplier for Hezbollah. The destruction of four IDF tanks within two months during 1997 displayed the vulnerability of armor in

mountainous terrain against sophisticated weaponry in the hands of highly trained soldiers. This proved to be more of a psychological than physical blow to the IDF, given that the terrain of south Lebanon already placed considerable limitations on the capabilities of this weapon platform upon which the IDF had become so reliant.

The minimal effective use of airpower, once again due mainly to terrain and weaponry, was the final significant technological blow to the IDF. Attempting to kill very small groups of guerillas hiding in 2,000-foot deep wadis with airpower proved a waste of time and once again only placed at risk otherwise valuable resources. Hence, another critical pillar of Israel's tactical plan proved of little use in this form of warfare and terrain.

A constant trickle of casualties, increasing Hezbollah military success, and Hezbollah weaponry that had strategic, as well as operational and tactical implications, all combined to wear down the IDF soldiers, the Israeli public and their politicians. Continually improving Hezbollah tactics, combined with an apparent lack of IDF tactical innovation, further effected the progress of the conflict, which had turned inexorably in Hezbollah's favor by the mid 1990s. The three operational errors of relying on the SLA, a proxy army to fight its war, the establishment of a chain of outposts, and inadequate training and an incorrect structure to fight guerilla warfare in unison also decreased the IDF's chances of success. In the end, all of the above military factors, combined with Hezbollah's dominance of the propaganda and media war, impacted severely on the morale of both the IDF and the Israeli public to the point of forcing its withdrawal from Lebanon.

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CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE LEBANON WAR ON ISRAELI SOCIETY

The dazzling victories in the '67 war . . . contributed to the building of a myth around the IDF and its personnel. The common expectations from the IDF were that any future war would be short with few casualties.¹

Dr. George Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*

Understanding the Psyche of the IDF and Israeli Society

To understand the effects of the Lebanon war on Israel, one must first understand the impact of the IDF and its previous military successes on Israeli society. This chapter will assess the place of the IDF in Israeli society, given the IDF's short but successful history prior to 1982 through to the Lebanon quagmire and the creation of the Four Mothers Movement (see below for details) in the 1990s. In addition, it will study the effect of the Sabra and Chatilla Refugee Camp massacres and the Qana massacre on the Israeli public and the overall consequence and social impact of the Lebanon war on Israel's psyche.

As a result of military victories over its Arab enemies in 1948, 1956, and 1967 with comparatively minor casualties against numerically superior opposition, Israeli public and military confidence, bolstered by technological military enhancements and Western international acclaim, soared. With the addition of their newly gained strategic depth, more defensible borders and increased arms support from the USA, by 1973 Israel appeared to be "an impregnable fortress defended by an invincible military."² The remarks of Israel's Commander of the 162d Armored Division, Major General Avraham Adan, in 1973 were typical of the time. "That the Egyptians and Syrians would dare to

launch a war against Israel seemed incredible. I couldn't believe that they were unaware that the Israeli Defence Forces were far superior to theirs, and they would be risking a painful defeat."³ It was perhaps this attitude that led Israel's military and political leadership to ignore the warning signs and Arab military buildup along its borders in 1973.

Despite the fact that Israel achieved a military victory in 1973, the result was far closer than many Western commentators reported in the euphoria of the moment. In addition to the unexpectedly high casualty rate, the subsequent Agranat Commission, ordered by Israel, revealed far more of the political and military failings than were first publicly understood.

The Agranat Report shattered two popular notions in Israeli society: the infallibility of the intelligence community and the invincibility of the armed forces. Both beliefs drew sustenance in large measure from the blitzkrieg-type victory of the Six Day War. In 1973, that triumph came to haunt the IDF as an albatross: a less than stellar performance would fail to meet Israeli society's high expectations. The periods of shock, uncertainty, and peril that had ripped through the armed forces and society during the first days of the war became indelibly ingrained on the national psyche.⁴

The comments of Ariel Sharon on 7 October 1973 during the pullback of Israeli troops from the Suez Canal were perhaps the most poignant in regard to the shock suffered by the IDF and, subsequently, by the Israeli public.

I...saw something strange on their faces--not fear but bewilderment. Suddenly something was happening to them that had never happened before. These were soldiers who had been brought up on victories--not easy victories maybe, but nevertheless victories. Now they were in a state of shock. How could it be that these Egyptians were crossing the canal right in our faces? How is it that *they* were moving forward and *we* were defeated?⁵

In many ways, the 1973 war appeared to be a watershed for Israel psychologically, yet, once again, perhaps the salve of victory masked the harsh realities

of war. The IDF still enjoyed almost total and unquestioned support, particularly of the Israeli public. These links with the public have historically been one of the IDF's greatest assets, given that 80 percent of the Army is militia and popular support is therefore crucial. The downside of this close relationship, however, is that public opinion is more likely to spread more rapidly through the military structure than in a Western country. As a result, the Lebanon war severely stretched this linkage for the first time in Israel's history.⁶

The Impact of Lebanon

By 1982, Israel was again on the verge of war, however, this time national survival was not at stake. As Zeev Schiff points out, Israel's Defence Forces were mandated only to defend Israel, not to install or topple governments of neighboring countries. The actions of Sharon, Begin, Shamir, and Eitan to invade Lebanon were to have an enormous impact on Israeli society that would split the nation.⁷ Notwithstanding the Israeli public's initial support for some form of retaliatory action against the PLO, the Lebanon war was the first Israeli war in which national consensus as to the war's aims, inevitability or even its necessity was never fully gained.⁸

Even Israel's more junior military commanders understood the IDF's true role. Colonel Eli Geva, an armored brigade commander speaking on behalf of a group of brigade commanders prior to the invasion, told Sharon that everything had to be done to avoid unnecessary wars and that fighting should only occur when there was no other choice. In effect, Sharon was informed that, should the invasion exceed the limits of purely defensive objectives, the ranks of the IDF itself would split.⁹ Geva subsequently resigned from the Army during the invasion, when, after leading the advance up the coast

to Beirut, he realized that Sharon did indeed intend to assault the city and that Israel's intentions were no longer defensive. Geva's resignation shocked Israel.

The war in Lebanon has challenged for the first time since independence the relation of the IDF to the political structure and to the society it serves. The question is fundamental: shall the IDF be used in its traditional ethical and historical context as a defensive force, or has Israel become like other nations whose armed forces are used to achieve political goals that have little to do with defense of the homeland?¹⁰

It would seem that leading politicians at that time had already made their decision with regard to this question, even if many in the IDF and the Israeli public had not. In a speech to the IDF Command and Staff College in August 1982, then Prime Minister Menachem Begin stated that "there is no obligation to wage war only when there is no choice. There is no moral commandment which says that a people must or may fight only when their back is to the sea or at the brink of a precipice. Such a war can lead to disaster, if not to a holocaust."¹¹ The now common reliance on "The Holocaust Cause" is neither new nor surprising. The transformation from a defensive force to an initiator of war, with the intent of establishing a new regime in a foreign country when the survival of the state was never in doubt, however, was a new concept for Israel.

As the IDF moved towards Beirut and the television pictures of the destruction in Tyre and Sidon were seen in Israel and around the world, the discovery both domestically and internationally that the Israeli Government had not told the truth about its aims polarized public opinion, with a growing minority of Israelis opposing the war. The often indiscriminate shelling of Beirut resulting in the deaths of many innocent civilians and further fueled the fires of opposition. As the siege continued and it became obvious that the PLO could not be destroyed, opposition to the war gained momentum as even soldiers

returning from the front in late June 1982 began protesting the invasion in front of Begin's Jerusalem offices.¹²

When the Israeli invasion started, the *Jerusalem Post Newspaper* of 2 July 1982 reported that 93.3 percent of Israelis regarded it as either definitely or reservedly justified. Within a month though, the attitude had begun to shift and this support had dropped to 66 percent. Operation Peace for Galilee was being denounced as an instrumental *milchemet brera* (war of choice), which implied that it went against all that Israel and the IDF stood for and was, therefore, almost criminal by nature.¹³

Meanwhile, inside Israel, groups of reservists joined together in a variety of ad hoc movements, all of which had this in common: Their members questioned the war and insisted they would rather go to prison than participate. Eventually, the number refusing to serve reached several hundred, of whom about 170 were tried and imprisoned; these numbers were unprecedented in the history of the IDF.¹⁴

It is fanciful to imagine that this number of refusals would not reflect to at least a certain degree, a significant undercurrent within Israeli society against the Lebanon war and the IDF's role given that its prior history of only being used to ensure Israel's national survival. This premise was still the basis of the beliefs held by much of the IDF's Officer corps as shown by Colonel Geva's actions upon reaching Beirut. The policy of indiscriminately bombing civilians and attacking the Syrians who had sought to avoid conflict clearly upset many Israelis who up until now had believed in the moral superiority of Israel's actions.

Sabra, Chatilla, and Qana

For the purposes of this chapter, the questions of how and why the Sabra and Chatilla Refugee Camp massacres occurred between 16-18 September 1982, resulting in the deaths of several hundred civilians, are not so important. Rather, the focus is on their

impact on the IDF and Israeli domestic opinion. In the words of Richard A. Gabriel, “No other event in the Lebanon war had such a profound impact on the Israeli public and its political leadership or did so much to undermine the rationale of the war.”¹⁵

During the period 16-18 September 1982, following the expulsion of the majority of the PLO, the IDF allowed the Christian Phalange into the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps to purge any remaining PLO fighters. Instead, the Phalange massacred several hundred Palestinian refugees comprising mostly women, children, and old men. The role of the IDF and Defense Minister Sharon in allowing the Christian Phalange to enter the camps to cleanse remaining pockets of potential resistance after the departure of the PLO, despite military intelligence and Mossad warnings of revenge attacks, turned Israeli domestic and international public opinion into outrage. “The reports of the Sabra and Chatilla massacres almost overnight destroyed the IDF’s credibility as a humane force. They also shook to the core Israel’s civilian support for the war.”¹⁶

An estimated 400,000 people, approximately one-ninth of Israel’s Jewish population, demonstrated in Tel Aviv in response to the massacres on 25 September 1982, demanding political and military accountability. As the investigation into the massacre deliberated, Israel’s public support for the war plunged further, dropping to 45 percent in October and then 34 percent in December. Increasingly, Israeli’s viewed the war in Lebanon as a morass in which the IDF floundered with little hope of victory.¹⁷

Thomas L. Friedman, an Israeli journalist, perhaps best summarized Israeli reaction to the massacre. “Sabra and Chatilla was something of a personal crisis for me. The Israel I met on the outskirts of Beirut was not the heroic Israel I had been taught to identify with. The Israelis knew just what they were doing when they let the Phalangists

into those camps.”¹⁸ Esther Koenigsberg Begigi, an American-born psychologist who immigrated to Israel in the late seventies remarked:

The Lebanon invasion actually changed her feelings toward Israel more than toward the Arabs. In this she was not alone, as a Jew or as an Israeli. It was always very important for me to feel that Israel was right, was smart, and that it always did things the right way. I was taught that Israel wants peace more than others and just wants to be left alone. After Lebanon, everything wasn't so clear. I really felt anger.¹⁹

As if the self-awakening were not bad enough, the clear offense taken by the Western media in particular affected Israeli self-confidence. The fascination of the Christian West with God's Chosen People has often led to blind support for Israel and a willingness to look away when events did not seem “just right,” if not an outright justification of Israel's actions based on the West's guilt surrounding the Holocaust. Israel is very aware of this anomaly and has openly played upon it for decades. Thomas L. Friedman highlighted these points and their corollaries in his book *From Beirut to Jerusalem* when speaking of Israel's history and relationship with the West as seen by Abba Eban, an Israeli statesman petitioning the UN.

We were forming a state for people who were not yet here. And we were not a majority in our country. We had to seize the ears of the world. We could not just rely on pure judicial arguments. We could not argue like Ghana. We had to make ourselves exceptional. So we based our claim on the exceptionality of Israel, in terms of the affliction suffered by its people, and in terms of our historical and spiritual lineage. We knew we were basically appealing to a Christian world for whom the biblical story was familiar and attractive, and we played it to the hilt. We are still the victims of our own rhapsodic rhetoric, and our own rhapsodic defense. We chose the line. We chose to emphasize at the beginning of our statehood that Israel would represent the ancient Jewish morality. Some Israelis now complain about being judged by a different standard (from other countries in the Middle East). But the world is only comparing us to the standard we set for ourselves. You can't go out and declare that we are the descendants of kings and prophets and then come and say, why does the world demand that we behave differently from Syria.²⁰

In addition, the West wanted to believe that Israel was different, better. To realize that it too had adopted a version of “Hama Rules” (in reference to Assad’s massacre of thousands of Palestinians in the town of Hama in 1983) and was, in fact, no different than the rest was a shock and a disappointment.

When Israel was the darling of the West after the 1967 war, Israeli leaders and American Jews could not read enough stories in the newspapers about this “heroic little state”; no one in Israel then complained about the spotlight on their country. Twenty years later, after Israel’s behavior in Lebanon and the West Bank has often cast it in a negative light, Israelis have become some of the loudest critics of the foreign press. Why us they ask?²¹

The Qana massacre of 18 April 1996 had a lesser impact on Israel, possibly because it had over the previous fourteen years grown somewhat immune. It still, however, had a significant international impact, again undermining any Israeli pretense at occupying the high moral ground in this conflict. The deaths of 109 Lebanese civilians and four UN observers, all of whom were taking shelter in a UN compound, by Israeli artillery shelling during Operation Grapes of Wrath, drew outraged international condemnation. Further, it seemed only to confirm the West’s belief that Israel was indeed no different than the rest of the world. In addition it angered the UN, which had not only witnessed and investigated the attack, but also lost observers at the same time. Israel could not sustain this sort of bad publicity and yet maintain credibility.

The Israeli Peace Movement

An outgrowth of Israel’s involvement in Lebanon was the development of the Peace Movement. The Israeli Peace Movement is made up of a number of small entities or groups. *Shalom Achshav* (Peace Now), the largest grassroots movement in Israel’s history, was founded in March 1978 by 348 reserve commanders, officers, and combat

soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces. Experience had taught these citizen soldiers that only a politically negotiated solution could end their nation's hundred-year war with its Arab and Palestinian neighbors. As they wrote to then Prime Minister Menachem Begin: “Real security can be achieved only when we achieve peace.”²²

In order to advance its philosophy that peace is the only road to true security, *Shalom Achshav* has developed a comprehensive pro-peace programming in Israel. “Peace Now Youth” has emerged as Israel's largest most dynamic youth peace movement, with over thirty chapters throughout Israel. In addition to educational activities promoting values of democracy, human rights and peace within Israel, *Shalom Achshav* Youth has organized a Youth Dialogue project with Palestinian youth from the West Bank and Gaza. The project is rooted in the belief that strong and enduring peace is both inevitable and achievable if Israelis and Palestinians get to know each other as individuals and understand each other’s cultures, histories and worldviews. *Shalom Achshav*’s “Commitment to Peace and Social Justice Project” promotes a partnership between supporters of the peace process and communities suffering directly from delays in the peace process. Using a combination of community-based activity and carefully planned national media and public education campaigns, the Project provides strong economic arguments, to groups such as new immigrants and low-income communities, to help them understand the connection between their economic situations and the peace process.²³

The Four Mothers movement was founded in February 1997 following an Israeli military helicopter crash that killed seventy-three soldiers. Its goal was the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon in accordance with UN Resolution 425. The 4 Mothers movement

is not politically affiliated and demonstrated peacefully, standing weekly at major intersections with signs or picketing the offices of politicians. Whenever a soldier died, they demonstrated outside the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv.

The criticism we hear most, Linda Ben-Zvi has remarked, is that we're undermining army morale. Many of the sons strongly object to what their mothers are doing. But, she argues, herein lies a major difference between the 60s Vietnam protests and today's get-the-troops-out-of-Lebanon campaign. During Vietnam, we regarded the soldiers as our enemies. The soldiers in Lebanon are our sons. We support them completely. It's for their sake we're acting. Our protest is aimed at the government. The strongest political backing for the 4 Mothers' stance comes from Labor's Yossi Beilin, who has launched his own Movement for a Peaceful Withdrawal from Lebanon.²⁴

Red Line was another Israeli protest movement whose aim was to expedite the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon. It was formed in February 1999 and utilized protests and conferences with high media access to gain exposure. Although the precise effects of these groups are difficult to gauge, they do show that they are a phenomenon of the Lebanon war and a reaction to the ideological change in role of the IDF. No longer was the IDF purely a defender of the nation's security; it was now also an armed force that was used to achieve political goals in a foreign country.

Social Changes

Although some things never change, one thing is for certain: the Israel of the twenty-first century is not the Israel of the late twentieth century. The role of the IDF in Israeli society is no longer what it was. Indeed, Israeli society itself is undergoing significant changes as it moves from a somewhat religious to an increasingly secular and Western focus and approach to life.

Israel's military, from the inception of the state, has been the great social equalizer, the pivotal unifying force with a unique position and influence, above politics and religion, the shield that has allowed the Jewish State to survive

against overwhelming odds. However, in recent years, the military's shortcomings, blemishes and failures, from training accidents to human rights abuses in the occupied territories, have come under unprecedented public scrutiny, something unimaginable a few years ago. Like the nation itself, it is undergoing profound change, moving from a largely citizen army to a leaner, more professional organization. But as Israel prospers and tries to negotiate with its Arab neighbors to make peace after half a century of unremitting warfare, young men are less inclined to serve in the military. Until a few years ago, military service was essential for a young man seeking civilian employment, even in securing a mortgage or obtaining a drivers license.²⁵

The 1973 Yom Kippur War began the process wherein Israel's sense of moral superiority and security, as well as the IDF's morale, has been slowly but surely undermined. It was followed by the 1982 Lebanon invasion that dragged on for eighteen years and the Palestinian Intifada, both of which had a demoralizing effect on an Army and a nation whose ethical core had been the perception of its "purity of arms."²⁶ The image of an army and a nation that could do no wrong had long disappeared.

In August 1995, Israel was jolted to the core when a retired brigadier general and Auschwitz survivor, Arye Biro, confessed publicly that, as a captain commanding an airborne platoon dropped behind enemy lines in the Mitla Pass in the 1956 Sinai war, he and his men had executed 49 Egyptian prisoners because he had been ordered to advance and did not have enough troops to guard the Egyptians. Others followed Biro with their own gruesome, long-buried tales of executing Arab prisoners in other wars, events that had been suppressed by the military and were known only to the participants. As these confessions piled up, with historians for the first time saying that such incidents were far from unique in Israel's military annals, former general Ariel Sharon, the ultra-hawk who was Biro's brigade commander in 1956, was prompted to say that Israel was committing "a kind of national suicide" by exposing these shocking events that tarnished not only the nation's self-image, but also the hallowed, and carefully protected, reputation of the IDF. In any event, the disclosures triggered an intense and passionate national debate and much painful soul-searching by Israelis who had always cherished the belief that their fight for survival against overwhelming odds gave them a moral superiority over their Arab adversaries because, by dint of their history, culture and Jewish traditions, they adhere to a higher code of conduct in war.²⁷

Due to a twenty-year statute of limitations on murder in Israel, the soldiers were not prosecuted. Israel's war crimes legislation refers only to Nazi genocide committed

during World War II. Zeev Haefetz, an Israeli former government spokesman and author, noted the irony between Israel's demands for justice against Nazi war criminals fifty years after the fact and Israel's unwillingness to prosecute its own war criminals from 1956. As many as 2,000 Egyptian prisoners were massacred in 1956 according to Professor Israel Shahak, an Israeli scholar and historian.²⁸ These findings tore at the fabric of Israel's self-perception and outraged many, only adding to the furor created over the Sabra and Chatilla and Cana massacres.

That Israel is changing can no longer be disputed. It is almost thirty years since it has fought a conventional war, a war that galvanized the nation through the goal of state survival. Instead, it has been preoccupied with smaller guerilla wars against the Palestinians and the Hezbollah. During this time, the IDF has increasingly transformed into a "peacetime army," thereby diminishing the IDF's traditional role as Israel's citizen army and melting pot. Accordingly, Israel's youth is preoccupied with individual wealth and lifestyle rather than self-sacrifice and military glory. The IDF is now confronting one of its greatest challenges.

The problem of declining motivation and efforts to evade reserve duty had reached plague proportions. Defence Minister Mordechai came face-to-face with the problem when he met recruits at the Tel Hashomer induction center near Tel Aviv in August (1996). During the televised encounter, he asked a group of about 100 young men due to join the artillery and armored corps how many of them wanted to serve in combat units – only three raised their hands. The rest said they wanted to be "jobnikim" or rear echelon personnel. A shocked Mordechai claimed that the problem is not widespread but is enough of a symptom that we, the defense establishment, the IDF, the government, educators, parents and the public, will have to do something to strengthen the desire to serve. Even senior officers are now admitting that they are finding it difficult to keep high-caliber men, particularly middle-ranking officers, who are increasingly disillusioned with the way the military has lost its luster and the respect of the nation.²⁹

Israel now has to adapt its politics, institutions, and national character as it evolves from a Jewish state to a multiconfessional and binational country. The gap between the shrinking ultra-orthodox and the burgeoning secular sector of Israel's community grows wider daily and Israel's honeymoon with its once undefeated and righteous military has disappeared. The "right of passage" once symbolized by service in the IDF is no longer necessary as Israeli youth seek a more typical Western approach to life.

It is difficult to estimate the exact effect of the Lebanon war on the IDF and Israel's national psyche. It is clear, however, that the ramifications on both of eighteen years in a drawn-out engagement with little national security interest at stake, resulting in many casualties and ultimately withdrawal without ever having achieved any of its stated goals, have been significant. It has seen the development of a peace movement and a political and ideological transformation in the IDF's perceived role in Israel and its national interests that has changed its perception and standing within the community at large. The dislocation between the IDF and society is becoming palpable; however, the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister on 6 February 2001 may see an attempt to restore this relationship through a return to emphasizing Zionist national pride. In his chapter, "The Betrayal of Faith," Martin Van Creveld wrote in 1998:

The parents of many conscripts now see the army as a greater danger to their children's welfare (including, specifically, their moral welfare) than the Arabs. Not only is the IDF losing the battle for the present, but it stands in danger of being robbed of its past, that quasi-mythological past that is essential to the morale of any army, new or old. In a country that had always prided itself on its citizen's patriotism, beginning in the early eighties hundreds simply refused to serve and declared themselves prepared to accept the consequences. In addition, tens of thousands evaded service by one means or another. Along with faith in the military, faith in the state itself is being undermined.³⁰

Conclusion

In conclusion, Israel's faith in an invincible army, emanating from a state with the highest moral principles of humanity and war, has been shaken considerably by the events of the war in Lebanon, which have acted as an instrument for change in Israeli society and the IDF's role in the state. From a once proud nation convinced of its unquestionable moral veracity and military invincibility, it has become aware that it too is a nation equally fallible, both morally and militarily, to the excesses of power. It has suffered its first military defeat despite its technological superiority, in an unnecessary war against a numerically and technologically inferior enemy. It has for the first time been forced to look backwards at a tainted military past, as well as inwards at its political and national intentions, and it has not always approved of what it has found.

Israel has been forced to alter its national self-image, as well as its image of the IDF. No longer can it rely on the Christian West to acquiesce to all of its actions based on its historical "purity;" it has been tested and found wanting. It has become a victim of its own rhetoric, and as many immigrants have discovered, it is no more or less morally or militarily superior to the region it has despised and has continually been at war with. The development of the Peace Movement is proof that Israel is tiring of military solutions, and the desire of its youth to seek lifestyle and wealth over service to the nation on the frontline in Lebanon has had serious ramifications for the IDF and indeed, Israel's security. The war in Lebanon was unquestionably a catalyst for change in Israel's national psyche and the IDF's *raison d'être*.

¹Dr. George Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), 8.

²*Ibid.*, 3-5.

³*Ibid.*, 29.

⁴*Ibid.*, 78.

⁵*Ibid.*, 40.

⁶Richard A. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 29.

⁷Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 43-44.

⁸Dan Bavly and Eliahu Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 15.

⁹*Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰Gabriel, 225.

¹¹Bavly and Salpeter, 165.

¹²M. Thomas Davis, *40 Kilometers into Lebanon* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1987), 103.

¹³Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), 298.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁵Gabriel, 218.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁷Van Creveld, 299.

¹⁸Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 164.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 184.

²⁰Ibid., 438-439.

²¹Ibid., 448.

²²Peace Now Homepage, available from <http://srd.yahoo.com/srst/319673/peace+now>"; Internet; accessed 3 February 2001.

²³Peace Now Homepage, available from www.peacenow.org/programs; Internet; accessed 17 February 2001.

²⁴Peter Hirschberg, *Lebanon: Israel's Vietnam?* available from www.angelfire.com/il/FourMothers/doc47; Internet; accessed 6 August 2000.

²⁵Ed Blanche, "Is the Myth Fading for the Israeli Army? - Part 1," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 1996, 547-548.

²⁶Ibid., 549.

²⁷Ibid., 550.

²⁸Ibid., 550.

²⁹Ed Blanche, "Is the Myth Fading for the Israeli Army? - Part 2," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 1997, 28.

³⁰Van Creveld, 353-363.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

What Combination of Factors Resulted in the Withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon in May 2000?

The seeds of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon were inadvertently sown in the declaration of Israel's independence in 1948, which resulted in the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians. Having settled for some time within Jordan from where they mounted attacks against Israel, the Palestinians were driven out by the Jordanians to south Lebanon in 1970, where they began to establish a state-within-a-state, whilst continuing to launch attacks against Israel. The inability of a weak Lebanese government, torn asunder by civil war, to establish control in southern Lebanon, allowed the Palestinians to dominate the south and its inhabitants, comprising mostly poor and politically underrepresented Shiite Muslims.

Frustrated by continuing rocket attacks into the northern Galilee and enraged by an attack by Palestinian gunmen on a bus resulting in the deaths of Israeli civilians, the IDF launched Operation Litani, an invasion into Lebanon, on 14 March 1978. In essence, this invasion was really an act of retaliation rather than a clearly thought out strategy with feasible political goals driving attainable military objectives. The stated objectives were the destruction of PLO bases and the establishment of an extended security zone to protect Israel from PLO attacks.

The first objective failed completely due to a lack of IDF forces and the failure to capture the cities of Tyre and Sidon, the hub of the PLO at the time. In addition, instead of killing PLO guerillas, the IDF merely pushed them temporarily north towards Beirut.

While territorially speaking the second objective was achieved, that is, the physical area for a security zone had been captured, in truth the principal of maintaining a security zone could not be achieved, as the area was too large to defend and control and as a result, PLO attacks continued almost unabated.

Notwithstanding the relative lack of success during Operation Litani, there were valuable lessons to be learned by the IDF and Israel's politicians, including the requirement to carefully link political goals with achievable military means and the requirement to structure the force for the type of war to be fought. Worse still, Israel failed to correctly identify the true nature of the problem, in this case, that the Palestinian situation was a political problem requiring a political solution, the recognition of a displaced people with legitimate territorial and national concerns.

Further, the IDF should have learned that Lebanon's terrain supported guerilla warfare and that weapons, such as armor and aircraft, were of limited use in this environment against this type of enemy. Lastly, the IDF killed an estimated 2,000 Lebanese civilians and began alienating the very people from whom it needed to win support, the Shiites. Had these lessons been heeded, Israel may well have approached its 1982 invasion of Lebanon very differently rather than repeating many of the mistakes of 1978, an error that resulted in the loss of thousands of Israeli as well as Lebanese lives during an unwinnable eighteen-year war.

The IDF's 1982 invasion of Lebanon in Operation Peace for Galilee was equally disappointing for Israel in terms of effective results, and, worse still, resulted in their remaining unsuccessfully in Lebanon for a further eighteen years and effectively suffering their first military defeat. As always, the reasons for this eventual defeat were

many and varied, and no one factor singularly ensured Israel's failure. It was, however, the blending of a multitude of factors over a long period of time that eventually brought defeat. The reasons were a combination of political, military and social factors that will be summarized in brief.

Political

In short, the impetus for Israel's invasion of Lebanon were the political errors that ensured Israel's failure in Lebanon eighteen years later. There were no new political imperatives during the middle or late 1990s that changed this situation. In other words, politically, the seeds of failure were sown on day one of the invasion, if not earlier.

Despite military advice from three former Chiefs of Staff to the contrary, suggesting that the Palestinian problem could not be solved militarily, Israel chose to attempt to solve the problem through military force. Israel's two key leaders at the time of the 1982 invasion, Prime Minister Menachim Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, were philosophically predisposed to war as the appropriate solution. Both failed to acknowledge the Palestinians as a legitimate entity with legitimate territorial concerns, but rather viewed them as terrorists who could be dealt with militarily. As with 1978, they again failed to correctly identify the true nature of the problem and, therefore, chose the wrong method of solving it.

Despite trying for almost twelve months to convince the Cabinet of the necessity of invading Lebanon,, there was clearly no consensus. Due to their inability to influence their political peers, Begin and Sharon continually provoked the Palestinians and then deceived their own Cabinet as to their true intentions in Lebanon. Begin and Sharon sought to employ their Big Plan, which envisaged the destruction of the PLO in Lebanon

and also included the encirclement or destruction of Beirut, the PLO's headquarters. In addition, Israel had as another of its objectives the aim of establishing a new regime in Lebanon as well as the removal of Syria from Lebanon, a task that could only be achieved through war with the Syrians, something the Israeli Cabinet wished to avoid.

The Israeli Cabinet rejected this plan, however, as a result of a series of incidents involving provocation and retaliation by both sides. Instead, the Cabinet publicly approved the implementation of the Small Plan, which simply involved ensuring the safety of the population of Galilee by pushing the PLO beyond range of fire and not extending beyond 40 kilometers into Lebanon. By definition, this would take the IDF nowhere near Beirut nor into contact with the Syrians. It is a matter of history that Begin and Sharon in fact employed the intentions and forces required of the Big Plan, but with modifications, including not landing forces north of Beirut and not immediately cutting the Beirut-Damascus Highway. These modifications resulted in a ill-considered plan that was incapable of properly achieving its intended results.

After one week in which the PLO had been driven north into Beirut, Israel publicly changed its objectives. The new objectives included ensuring that all foreign (Syria, Israel and the PLO) armies withdrew from Lebanon, a new Lebanese government be formed, and the new government agree to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Unfortunately, the capture of Beirut was predicated on a critically incorrect assumption, that the Christian Phalange would undertake the fighting in Beirut.

In accordance with prior warnings, the Phalange refused to fight the Palestinians in Beirut, and the Israelis were therefore required to undertake the very action, an urban battle in the streets of Beirut, they had avoided in Tyre and Sidon in 1978 if they were to

be successful. This resulted in heavy casualties on both sides, and so Israel resorted to a six-week siege involving heavy air and artillery bombardment in an attempt to destroy the PLO. This only served to kill thousands of innocent civilians and to turn the Lebanese of all faiths against Israel. In turn, this increasingly raised the consciousness of the international community regarding the plight of the Palestinians and drew increasing condemnation upon Israel. Bashir Gemayel, Israel's intended puppet in Lebanon, was voted in as Lebanon's leader, but was killed shortly after, thereby removing Israel's only hope of installing a friendly ally, as well as any hope of signing a peace treaty.

Although much of the PLO was deported from Lebanon, its structure and the Palestinian issue remained intact, and the massacres at the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps only served to undermine any potential legitimacy Israel may have had for invading Lebanon. Worse still, Israel had failed to achieve its objectives, initial or subsequent. Much of the PLO had been deported but its structure remained intact and shortly afterwards, PLO guerillas were again launching attacks into the Galilee from the safe-harbor of south Lebanon. The Syrians remained in Lebanon with their position strengthened. Israel had no new ally to its north and no ratified peace treaty to show for its trouble. In addition, it had alienated all elements of Lebanese society, and in the process spawned a newer and even deadlier enemy, Hezbollah.

Notwithstanding its almost total failure to achieve its objectives, both stated and hidden, Israel chose to exacerbate its situation by remaining in Lebanon, albeit withdrawing to the security zone. In so doing, it enlisted (often by force) the assistance of the South Lebanese Army (SLA), a proxy Lebanese militia in south Lebanon, to assist Israel in controlling the south. Using heavy-handed tactics, the IDF and SLA repeatedly

bombed villages in retaliation for increasing attacks by Hezbollah on IDF and SLA patrols and bases within Lebanon, in the hope of turning the locals against the guerillas. This official policy proved counterproductive as it caused the locals of all faiths to support or join Hezbollah to oust the invaders.

Despite poor military and political beginnings, Hezbollah developed into a competent military, political and social entity prepared to confront the Israelis in every aspect. Israel again failed to correctly identify the true nature of the problem by regarding Hezbollah as terrorists rather than as a Lebanese nationalist movement with legitimate claims to the defense of its territory against an occupying force. Hezbollah was a political movement holding parliamentary seats and, as the IDF had already discovered with the Palestinians, could not be simply destroyed militarily.

As was the case with Sabra and Chatilla, the massacre at Qana in 1996 greatly affected Israel's political legitimacy both domestically and internationally, and Israel continued to lose the propaganda war. In the end, Israel's acceptance of the Grapes of Wrath Understanding affirmed Hezbollah's legitimacy internationally, as well as its right to self-defense, whilst simultaneously undermining Israel's *raison d'être* for remaining in Lebanon. The establishment of the security zone had become a millstone around the IDF's neck as IDF and SLA patrols and positions simply became stationary targets for Hezbollah attacks whilst attacks into Galilee continued.

In conclusion, the private objectives of two or three Israeli politicians broadened the political and strategic objectives of the war and transformed it into a war against Syria and for control of Lebanon. Although the IDF initially achieved minor tactical objectives, Israel ultimately lost the wider political battle. Operation Peace for Galilee

finished with Lebanon more hostile to Israel than when it began, the PLO replaced by Hezbollah, Syrian influence substantially greater than before, and Israel's international standing significantly sullied. The mismatch between declared political and military objectives predictably resulted in major operational errors because Israel's key thrusts against the Syrians and Beirut never received the priority of attention required for success.

From the beginning, Israel was politically and militarily condemned to failure in Lebanon. Rather than devising a political strategy incorporating achievable military means to attain unambiguous achievable political goals, Israel employed a military plan promising but incapable of delivering political results. As the IDF moved inexorably towards Beirut in 1982, the military momentum increasingly drove the political imperative: the tail wagged the dog. Israel failed to develop an overarching strategy tying together the military objectives into a coherent political goal, and this pattern continued until its withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000.

Military

The IDF was essentially a conventional army that had relied on the three pillars of intelligence, armor, and airpower as the secrets to its success in the 1967 and 1973 conventional wars against Arab armies, notwithstanding the close call in 1973. Perhaps arrogantly, especially in light of the lessons provided in 1978, the IDF entered the war in Lebanon against opposing guerilla forces still using conventional means and an unchanged organizational structure. The three pillars of Israel's previous conventional victories and the "Albatross of Decisive Victory" combined to blind the IDF to the need

to change tactics and prepare for the war to be fought rather than fight the war they had prepared for, particularly following the siege of Beirut.

Infiltration of the SLA by Hezbollah, the increasing trend of SLA members to defect to Hezbollah by the mid-1990s and the capture of the SLA's Security Chief all combined to dismantle the Israeli intelligence network in south Lebanon. In addition to their infiltration, the static nature of the IDF and SLA defense made them easy to observe by locals and Hezbollah guerillas, turning real-time intelligence into a combat multiplier for Hezbollah. The minimal effectiveness of both armor and airpower due to terrain and improved technology available to Hezbollah only placed at risk valuable resources, rendering them targets rather than invincible weapon platforms. This psychologically and tactically effected the IDF, undermining its belief in its technological superiority and leveling the battlefield.

The Israeli public was not prepared to sustain IDF and SLA casualties at a ratio of one-to-one as a result of increasing Hezbollah tactical successes. Hezbollah continued to refine its tactics whereas the IDF (aside of the belated introduction of Egoz units) and SLA lacked tactical innovation, a facet that led to a defensive attitude and bunker mentality on the part of the IDF and SLA that surely handed the initiative and momentum to Hezbollah. Typical of this was Hezbollah's use of the Internet and world media to gain exposure and sympathy for their cause, a fact openly acknowledged by the IDF and which again impacted immediately on the morale of the Israeli public and IDF.

Three long-term tactical errors made by the IDF included the heavy reliance on a proxy militia to defend the security zone, the establishment of a chain of defensive outposts from which to operate, inadequate training, and an incorrect force structure to

fight a guerilla war. The collapse of the SLA had long been considered inevitable, but the SLA was only ever a thin veneer aimed at providing legitimacy to Israel's invasion, especially after Haddad's reign. Establishing a chain of defensive outposts only rendered the IDF and SLA stationery targets under permanent enemy and local observation and reinforced the defensive mind-set. The introduction of "Egoz" counterinsurgency units in the mid-1990s proved too little too late and provided only mixed results, while at the same time failing to mask the IDF's inability to adapt its structure and training to this form of warfare. As with previous wars, Israel's inability to accept large numbers of casualties due to its small population, particularly over a long period of time, again proved to be an Achilles Heel exploited by Hezbollah as it was by the Egyptians in 1973.

In contrast, Hezbollah, whose military beginnings were ordinary at best, showed a willingness and patience to learn and adapt. They combined military prowess with astute politics and social reform to win the confidence of the local population to eventually form a multiconfessional entity, whilst retaining its Shia philosophy. Rather than being inhibited by the terrain, Hezbollah turned it into a combat multiplier, even to the extent of developing weaponry in the form of roadside bombs that looked like the local terrain. Because they were Lebanese fighting for a just cause, the liberation of their homeland from an invader, time and casualties were never a significant issue for Hezbollah, who displayed an unremitting willingness to sacrifice themselves no matter what the cost. The result was an unquestioned military defeat for the IDF in Lebanon, Israel's first military defeat since its inception.

Social

The prolonged war in Lebanon, in which victory became increasingly unlikely and unnecessary casualties continued to mount, took an inevitable toll on the Israeli population and the IDF, who at no stage were fighting for national survival. Additionally, Israel had taken on the role of the aggressor seeking to influence the affairs of another state by changing a government, a role contrary to the often-publicized function of the IDF as solely a protector of the State of Israel. The invasion and wholesale destruction of a foreign nation for no real gain, resulting in the massacres at Sabra, Chatilla, and Cana, shook not only the Western world's impression of Israel but also Israel's own self-image. Previously considered, rightly or wrongly, as an underdog and bastion of moral and military veracity, Israel too proved equally vulnerable to political and military excesses.

Its defeat by a numerically, militarily, and technologically inferior enemy shattered its image of invincibility both within and without. Furthermore, it caused Israelis to acknowledge weaknesses they previously believed to be nonexistent due to its belief in its own rhetoric. The failure of the West to continue to acquiesce to Israel's self-proclaimed historical purity shocked many Israelis as its daily actions became susceptible to media scrutiny in the same way as those of the rest of the world. The development of the peace movement within Israel is a symptom typical of a nation questioning its own values, but proved tantamount to treason in the eyes of some Israelis.

Finally, the apparent change in attitude of Israel's youth from selfless service and responsibility for the common security to individual wealth and lifestyle has significantly effected the nation and the IDF. Well-documented cases of Israeli troops mutinying,

abandoning posts when under attack, refusing to turn-up for national service or seeking service only within the logistics fields are proving deeply disconcerting to political and military authorities. The war in Lebanon was unquestionably a catalyst for change in Israel's national psyche and the IDF's *raison d'être*.

Lessons Learned

The most significant *political lesson* of Israel's war in Lebanon is the need to correctly identify the true nature of any problem and to ensure that declared political objectives can be accomplished or facilitated, if required, by achievable military goals. A lack of unambiguous political objectives will otherwise provide a vacuum wherein the military momentum will inevitably dictate the political agenda. Typical of Israel's failure to correctly identify the true nature of its problem was its insistence that Hezbollah was a terrorist group. This changed officially in 1996 when Israel acknowledged Hezbollah was a guerilla group with legitimate rights to self-defense and to attack IDF and SLA troops in Lebanon. Thus, whereas Israel thought it had a Lebanon problem because of Hezbollah, in fact, it had a Hezbollah problem because it remained in Lebanon.

The most notable *military lesson* to be learned from Israel's war in Lebanon is the need to prepare and structure the fighting force for the war it will fight and not attempt to fight the war it is prepared for. Ordered by the political leadership to remain in Lebanon, the IDF needed to establish a guerilla warfare mentality and tactics within Lebanon, in other words, to fight a war that gave it the best chance of victory. A counter-guerilla required the winning of the hearts and minds of the locals, thereby undermining Hezbollah's *raison d'être* and maintaining the initiative rather than fighting from

observed defensive positions and developing a bunker mentality based on a reliance on technological superiority.

The most important *social lesson* of Israel's war in Lebanon is the need for a nation to fight a just cause, for example, national survival. Casualties, military excesses and national introspection will quickly undermine any other reason. The Achilles' heel of most Western democracies is the unwillingness to accept many casualties, a proven fact that has become obvious to any enemy, be it conventional or asymmetric.

Perhaps the most disturbing fallout of Israel's withdrawal was that since that time, Hezbollah has avoided attacking Israeli territory. This appears testimony to the fact that it was only Israel's continued needless occupation of south Lebanon that created the imperative for war in the first place. Additionally, it adds credence to the belief that many Israeli soldiers and Lebanese citizens died unnecessarily for a war prosecuted on a dubious political foundation, resulting in Israel's first military defeat. Further, by withdrawing, Israel achieved politically what it could not do by remaining and fighting in Lebanon, that is, it weakened Iran's and Syria's geopolitical leverage in Lebanon, as well as undermining Hezbollah's *raison d'être* as a military force.

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